

THE YOUNGEST

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# THE YOUNGEST

PLAYS BY PHILIP BARRY

THE YOUNGEST

YOU AND I

IN A GARDEN

WHITE WINGS

JOHN

PARIS BOUND

HOLIDAY



# THE YOUNGEST

*A Comedy*

BY  
PHILIP BARRY



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1929

**SAMUEL FRENCH**

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TO GEORGE PIERCE BAKER



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“THE YOUNGEST” was first produced by Robert Milton at the Gaiety Theatre in New York City on December 22, 1924. It was directed by Robert Milton and the settings were designed by Livingston Platt.

## CHARACTERS

CHARLOTTE MARTIN

OLIVER WINSLOW

MARK WINSLOW

AUGUSTA WINSLOW MARTIN

ALAN WINSLOW

MARTHA ("MUFF") WINSLOW

RICHARD WINSLOW

NANCY BLAKE

KATIE

The action of the play takes place in a small New York State City.

ACT I: *The Living-room of the Winslows' house.  
Late June, this year.*

ACT II: *The Porch. Fourth of July.*

ACT III: *The Living-room, the following evening.*

## ACT ONE

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## ACT ONE

*Scene: The Living-room of the Winslows' house, in one of the smaller cities of New York State. It is a long, comfortably furnished rectangular room which has served for years as the congregating place of the clan. The color scheme, so far as there is one, is blue and yellow, with ivory woodwork.*

*At Back Center there is a large fireplace, and on either side of it a French Window, opening upon a tile-paved porch. At Right is the entrance from the hall, and at Left, the entrance into the dining-room.*

*Time: Late June, this year. About six-thirty in the evening.*

*At Rise: CHARLOTTE WINSLOW sits in a large arm-chair near the center of the room, working on a piece of filet lace. She is about fifty-seven, a slender, pink-and-white woman with very gray hair.*

*AUGUSTA WINSLOW MARTIN is lying on a sofa at Left, reading a magazine. She is about twenty-eight, charmingly dressed, striking looking—a youthful replica of her mother, save for the rather sulky manner which takes the place of the older woman's querulous one.*

*ALAN MARTIN is sitting on a chair on the porch, near the French Window at Right, reading a law book. He is thirty—tall, agreeable looking, well-dressed, well-kept.*

*MARTHA WINSLOW (MUFF) is a cool, crisp girl of twenty-three. She is sitting on stool at Right of Center looking at a large scrap-book, which is on the table beside her.*

MARK WINSLOW *is standing near her, looking on. He has a new straw hat in his hand, upon which he is arranging a bright-colored band. He is thirty-two, and dressed very carefully in flannel trousers and blue coat.*

RICHARD WINSLOW *is sitting on a bench near the table, with his back to us. He is about twenty-two, and with a fresh, sensitive eager face. His hair has not been brushed since morning. He wears an old jacket, the collar of which is turned up. His trousers are old gray homespun, pitifully out of press. His heavy brown shoes, once good, are now genuine antiques, and no attempt has been made to renew their youth by polishing. His white shirt, with button-down collar, is badly frayed at the neck. His tie is pulled askew. He is smoking a pipe and industriously writing with a pencil upon a large pad of paper.*

MRS. WINSLOW

Martha!

MARK (*to MUFF*)

—One of these little spoiled darlings, I suppose.

MUFF

But that's not Nancy's fault. They go head over heels without a word of encouragement, don't they, Alan?

ALAN

I think you'll hold your own with her, Muff.

MUFF

I know my duty. When one has a guest, one effaces

oneself. 'Gusta—she's coming! She's on her way now!  
Can you believe it?

AUGUSTA

She must need a rest badly, to spend ten days in this hole.

MUFF (*to MARK*)

Look—here she is the summer we left school—  
[*MARK again looks at the book.*]

MRS. WINSLOW

Martha—

[*Again MUFF does not hear her.*]

AUGUSTA

You'll find there's some other reason than just a visit with dear Muff.

MUFF

—And this was in the April "Spur"—at Palm Beach.

MRS. WINSLOW

Martha—

AUGUSTA

—Otherwise she'd have asked you to come to her—

MUFF

Oh, dry up, will you?— The Lawrensons' dance, New Year's Eve. Isn't that costume amazing?

MARK

Not bad.

MUFF

She meant it to be.

MRS. WINSLOW

Mark—

MARK

Yes, Mother—?

MRS. WINSLOW

If you can get your sister's attention—

MUFF (*simultaneously*)

Anita Paine's wedding-party at Lenox—and Nancy the only one who's not smiling. Who says she's not clever? (MARK *puts his hands on* MUFF's *shoulders, turns her to* MRS. WINSLOW, *and again begins work on his hat.*) Oh—sorry, Mother . . .

MRS. WINSLOW

I simply want to remind you that Nancy's visit must not be a signal for a round of gaiety.

AUGUSTA

“A round of gaiety!” Here!— Isn't Mother sweet?  
[MUFF *turns away.*

MRS. WINSLOW

Augusta, I'm afraid that since your marriage your ideas of pleasure have become something warped. (RICHARD *is tapping on the table with his pencil.*) Richard—you'll scratch that table.  
[MARK *goes to see what* RICHARD *is doing.* RICHARD *stops.*

MUFF (*back to the scrap-book*)

Here's “The Times” account of her party. You were a fool to miss it.  
[RICHARD *lights his pipe.*

MARK

I can't be running down to New York for every little deb that comes out. (*He sniffs the air and looks at RICHARD. ALAN comes in from the porch.*) Lord—if you've got to smoke a rotten pipe, why not try tobacco in it?

[*He goes to a window and opens it.*]

MRS. WINSLOW

He mustn't inside, anyway. Richard—

MARK (*to ALAN*)

Have you fixed things with Lawson yet?

ALAN

No.

MRS. WINSLOW

Alan, I cannot understand why you make this very simple matter so—so monumental.

AUGUSTA

Honestly, you'd think Alan got paid for handling the family affairs.

MRS. WINSLOW

Well, doesn't he?

AUGUSTA

He does not. You all think that because he's my husband you can take the usual fees for granted, don't you?

ALAN

Never mind, Augusta. As it happens, Mother Winslow, the matter isn't so very simple.

MARK

Why isn't it?

ALAN

Lawson wants to resell the old house at Grand View. The purchaser requires some proof that you were sole owner.

[MUFF rises, and moves to another chair near the piano.]

MARK

Well, why not give it to him, without all this hocus-pocus?

[RICHARD begins to whistle to himself.]

ALAN.

Mark, if you'd confine yourself to your business and leave mine to me—

MRS. WINSLOW

*Ah-ah-ah-ah-ah!* Now, Alan—

[ALAN, return to his reading on the porch.]

AUGUSTA (*rising*)

This place would get on anyone's nerves.

MRS. WINSLOW

Why, I don't see how you could ask for a more charming spot. Oliver has always said that—

AUGUSTA

If Oliver took a fancy to Borneo, you'd think it Paradise.

[*Again she stretches herself out on the sofa.*]

MRS. WINSLOW

Hush. Richard—that whistling!



MARK

Quiet!

AUGUSTA

Lucky Nancy. (*softly as she stares into space.*)  
Southampton, Lenox, Palm Beach, New York.

MARK

What's wrong with this?

AUGUSTA

Every day like the day before. The same people  
saying the same things.

MARK

Sounds dangerous, Alan!— Only two years married,  
too.

AUGUSTA

That's one of the same things. (*RICHARD begin to sharpen a pencil noisily. AUGUSTA rises.*) Richard—  
for the love of Heaven!

[*He stops, returns the knife to his pocket, and goes on writing. AUGUSTA, thoroughly irritated, stands for a moment biting her lip, then goes to bookshelves. OLIVER WINSLOW comes in from the hall door at Right. He has two newspapers in his hand and a third in the pocket of his coat.*

OLIVER

Salutations, family!

AUGUSTA

Oliver—if you say that again!

OLIVER (*laughs*)

Still in a temper? Better watch out, Alan—only two years, too! (*MARK and OLIVER laugh heartily. He goes to MRS. WINSLOW, takes her hand and pats it.*) Well, young lady! How have you been?

MRS. WINSLOW

Dear boy—I thought surely you'd be home for luncheon.

[*ALAN comes in again from the porch.*]

OLIVER

There was a City Council Meeting. (*to ALAN.*) Old Lawson collared me again. He said he'd tried all morning to get you at the office. Weren't you there?

ALAN

Why—er—yes, I was there.

OLIVER

Then why didn't you give him what he wanted and get rid of him?

[*MARK takes a newspaper from OLIVER's pocket, goes to the sofa and begins to read it.*]

ALAN

The—er—the data isn't prepared yet.

MARK

"The data—." More hocus-pocus.

OLIVER

Why do you suppose I dug Father's will out for you?

ALAN

Oliver, I think perhaps you'd better get another lawyer.

MRS. WINSLOW

Why, really, Alan, you—

OLIVER

Yes—I think perhaps we had. (*To MARK.*) Have Luther Banks at the office Monday morning.

MARK

Yes.

ALAN

If you're so—

OLIVER

We needn't discuss it further.

[*ALAN returns to the porch.*]

MUFF

Noll! Nancy'll be here in no time. She's motoring from Cooperstown. Couldn't you just shout?

OLIVER

I suppose we Winslows are having a great honor done us. (*to RICHARD, who is noisily destroying some of his papers.*) Sh-h-h—don't do that.

MUFF

You'll think so, when you see her.

AUGUSTA

The Blakes are really very well-known in New York.

MARK

Oh, anyone with money can land at the top in New

York— (*to* AUGUSTA.) How about that notice for Miss Gracie's column? Did you say "guest" or "house guest"?

AUGUSTA

"Guest," of course.

MARK

Lord!— Will you never learn?

MUFF

Listen, you two—get it into your heads that—  
[MARK *rattles his paper at her.*]

MRS. WINSLOW

Now, children! No wrangling! People are always speaking of what a devoted family we are, and—

MUFF

—Never knowing the difference.

AUGUSTA (*to* MRS. WINSLOW)

What on earth does it matter what people say?

MARK

Well, will you listen to old Public Opinion herself?

MUFF

You're the one genuine, independent spirit, aren't you, Mark?

OLIVER

I think we all realize that a family's standing in its community is not a thing to be taken lightly.

MRS. WINSLOW

We can always depend upon Oliver. I remember his father saying to me before he passed on: "Charlotte,"

he said, "even if I hadn't made the success I have, I shouldn't be afraid to leave you to Oliver." (*MUFF throws up her hands and MARK slouches down deeper behind his newspaper, but MRS. WINSLOW continues undaunted:*) "He's a brave little fellow, sincere, and strong-minded— He will be your mainstay."

OLIVER

I simply happened to be the oldest, Mother.

MRS. WINSLOW

Dear boy!

MUFF

Noll, while Nancy's here, I'll need some extra loose change—and the looser, the better.

OLIVER

This is cheque day. Do you want to sign them, Mother?

MRS. WINSLOW

No, Oliver—you do.

AUGUSTA

—Same old ritual.

OLIVER

I'll make them out before dinner.

[*A small Irish terrier puppy wanders into the room through the French Window and goes toward MUFF.*]

MRS. WINSLOW

Oh—that animal again! Richard! (*RICHARD turns.*) It's very sweet, and we all love it—but it must stay outside.

[*RICHARD picks up the puppy, and moves toward the French Window with it.*]

AUGUSTA

—And if that nasty little alligator comes under my door again—it's the last of it—hear?

[OLIVER closes the window behind RICHARD and turns to the others.]

OLIVER

Oh—er—are you all—(*looking about, he sees that the other French Window is open.*) Augusta, close that window. (AUGUSTA does so.) —Are we all still agreed about Richard's allowance?

[*There is a short silence.*]

MRS. WINSLOW

Yes—you are quite right, quite—

MARK

Absolutely! He won't go to work till he has to.

MUFF (*thoughtfully*)

It seems pretty dirty to me.

OLIVER

It's for his own good, Muff.

[*He seats himself at the desk and begins to make out cheques.*]

MRS. WINSLOW

Poor Richard.

MUFF

Richard's all right. Chinese seems foolish, when you don't understand it. Not that I do—

[*She takes a piece of candy from the box on the work table, bites it, exclaims with abhorrence, "Ough!"*]



*Cocoanut!"*, flings it into the fireplace and selects another piece.

OLIVER

Well, now, do you think—

[*He stops as RICHARD comes in from Right with a manuscript bound in blue covers, and goes to the sofa.*]

MRS. WINSLOW

Augusta—after the four solid, is it three in the air, or two?

AUGUSTA

What?— Four solid, skip one, two-in-the-air.

[*Suddenly RICHARD chuckles to himself.*]

MARK

Gather round—something amuses it. (RICHARD *disregards him*. MARK *quotes*:) “Don’t sell the old house at Grand View. I used to go there as a child, and dream out my first stories.” (*to the family*:) He thinks people’ll soon be coming to see where the great Richard Winslow first—

[*Suddenly RICHARD flips a pillow over his shoulder into MARK’S face.*]

RICHARD

Damn you, Mark!

[MARK *rises, laughs, and returns the pillow.*]

MRS. WINSLOW

Richard!

RICHARD

Well, if—

MRS. WINSLOW

I sometimes wonder if you will ever learn to control your temper.

RICHARD

If Mark'll let me alone—

AUGUSTA (*to RICHARD*)

That shirt is disgusting. Look, Mother—the collar's in rags.

[*She plucks at one of the tattered edges.*]

MARK

Bryon probably got himself up that way.

RICHARD

Let it be, will you?

[*OLIVER turns and scrutinizes him.*]

OLIVER

Don't come to dinner like that. While Nancy's here, we'll dress.

MRS. WINSLOW

Oh, yes—and Richard—

RICHARD

What?

MRS. WINSLOW

I think it would be nice for you to take Mildred Spencer to the Club Dance tonight.

MUFF

Ha!

RICHARD

*I don't.*

AUGUSTA (*simultaneously*)

That's a good idea, Mother. (*to RICHARD.*) Why not?

RICHARD

I'm not going. And if I were, it wouldn't be with that unclaimed jewel.

[MUFF *laughs.*

MUFF

Score one for baby brother.

MRS. WINSLOW

Martha, that is not the sort of smartness to encourage. (*to RICHARD.*) I told Mrs. Spencer that one of you would call for Mildred at nine.

RICHARD

Let Oliver.

OLIVER

I shall be with—er—Nancy.

[MARK *glances at him quickly.*

RICHARD

Let Mark, then.

MARK

I shall be with Nancy.

MUFF

If there's one thing she adores, it's competition.

RICHARD

Well, let me inform you that—

MRS. WINSLOW

This has gone far enough. You will call at the Spencers' at five minutes before nine.

RICHARD

Well—if she tries to make me dance, I'll just break her leg.

MRS. WINSLOW

That will do!

RICHARD

It ought to.

AUGUSTA

Muff, where are you going to put her? Nancy, I mean—

MUFF (*hesitatingly*)

—Richard's room, I suppose.

RICHARD

Listen: if you think you're going to make me move all my—

MRS. WINSLOW (*placidly*)

Katie went over it this morning. You can go into the little room at the top of the stairs.

MARK

Hang it! That means using my bath.

MRS. WINSLOW

I don't think that will hurt you.

MARK (*rising*)

Understand, youngster, I'll have none of your four-footed friends in my bathroom.

[RICHARD *stares at him helplessly.*

MRS. WINSLOW (*to RICHARD*)

Now run along, like a good boy, and change your things over.

RICHARD

Why does it always have to be my room? What's to prevent Noll and Mark from doubling up?

MARK

What with? Laughter?

MUFF (*amused*)

Can you arrange it with them?

RICHARD (*largely*)

Can they arrange this with me?

OLIVER (*with a wave of his hand*)

Consider it arranged.

[RICHARD *goes to* MRS. WINSLOW.

RICHARD

But Mother—you *know* I use mine twice as much as they do theirs. And all my books and papers are there—

[ALAN *comes in again and goes to the bookshelves.*

MRS. WINSLOW

It will only be for a few weeks.

RICHARD

A few weeks! (*A brief pause. Then a sudden idea strikes him.*) Listen! Why do Alan and Augusta have to have two rooms? They're married—let them be domestic for awhile.

AUGUSTA

You're not in the middle ages, my dear.

RICHARD

I don't see why you both stick around here, anyway. I know Alan'd be tickled to death to get away. But you—you've got to have your little luxuries, haven't you?

MRS. WINSLOW

When Alan and Augusta find a suitable home—

RICHARD

Yes! They came here from their wedding-trip till they could find a house. There've been plenty of houses in the last two years—only not with a tennis-court, and swimming-pool, and three cars, like this one. If I had my say your worries'd be over, Alan. Out she'd go tomorrow. In my opinion, she—

AUGUSTA

The curious thing about your opinion is that it doesn't interest anyone.

OLIVER (*wearily, from the desk*)

Oh, we know what room Nancy will have. Why discuss it?

RICHARD

Exactly—there's no discussion— (*He takes a key from his pocket and holds it up triumphantly.*) This key settles it.

[*MARK rises and calmly plucks the key from his fingers.*]

MARK

So it does.



RICHARD

Confound you, Mark! I'll—

[*He tries without success to regain the key.*]

MARK

Ah, ah, ah, ah! —Papa spank!

MUFF

I'm sorry, Richard—but we can't very well show her into the coal-bin.

RICHARD

I'm sick of being treated like this! Who's she think she is, to come in here and take my room? The fool! I'll insult her! I'll act like the very devil!

OLIVER

We'll warn her about your—eccentricities.

MUFF

How I love people who make excuses for their families!

MRS. WINSLOW

I think this has gone far enough. Mark—let Richard into his room.

MARK

Yes, Mother. —Come on—you of the lion heart.  
(*RICHARD does not move.*) —Are you coming?

MRS. WINSLOW

—Then whatever you think should be moved, Mark.

MARK

Yes, Mother.

[*He turns to go out. RICHARD rises.*]

RICHARD

You dare touch my things! (MARK *laughs scornfully and goes out, Right.* RICHARD *hurries after him.*)  
I'll do all the moving necessary! I've got some things there that—  
[*He goes out, closing the door after him.*]

AUGUSTA

God bless our happy home.

MUFF

It's sickening the way Mark rides him. He might let up for a minute, sometime.

OLIVER

Mark does go it pretty steadily.

MUFF (*swiftly*)

You, too! You're about as light-headed with your darned helpfulness as—as a rock-crusher.

MRS. WINSLOW

Oliver knows what is best for him.

MUFF

Oliver is great. Praise be to Oliver.  
[MARK *re-enters.*]

MARK

If ever anyone needed stiff treatment—

MUFF

Mark, you do one more thing to Richard, and I'll kill you, see?  
[*She goes out on the porch.*]

MARK (*calling after her*)

Go douse your head, will you?

MUFF (*from the porch*)

Shut up!

MRS. WINSLOW

Please! I don't want Nancy to get the impression that we are one of those constantly wrangling families—

AUGUSTA (*with a short laugh*)

Mother!—as if anyone could!

[MUFF *re-enters excitedly.*

MUFF

There's a car out front! She's here!

[*There is a sound of a doorbell off Right. MUFF hurries out into the hall. There is a brief silence. Then:*

MARK

Now the thing to do, is to put her at her ease at once.

OLIVER

We must make her one of the family, Mother.

MRS. WINSLOW

Yes.

ALAN

Oh, no! Don't do that!

MRS. WINSLOW

And why not, pray? I'm sure you haven't suffered from the— (*Voices and laughter are heard from off Right, followed by a loud barking.*) —Isn't that a— rather large sound, for the puppy?

*[There is another bark and then NANCY'S voice is heard from the hall:]*

NANCY

Eustace! Behave! Remember you're visiting, you brute.

MRS. WINSLOW

Oh, dear—

ALAN

As I remember, she has a weakness for Great Danes.

MRS. WINSLOW

Great Danes! Oh, haven't I enough to bear?

MUFF (*from hall*)

Here, Katie—tell cook to feed him. (*Another loud barking.*) The bags go in Mr. Richard's room.

NANCY (*nearer:*)

In here?

MUFF

To the left, Angel—

ALAN (*opening the door for them*)

Here we are—

[NANCY BLAKE enters. She is about twenty-one, slim, of medium height, strikingly pretty, and altogether charming in her knitted dress, bright tweed coat and straw hat. She is a kind of cultivated MUFF, more mature, surer of herself, with better manners and considerably more poise. She has been governessed, travelled and trained since she was old enough to walk, and she has taken on the best of it, and left

*the rest. She carries a small bag which she drops on a table.*

NANCY (*going to* MRS. WINSLOW)

Mrs. Winslow!

MRS. WINSLOW

My dear—

[*They kiss.*

NANCY

It was too sweet of you to let me come.

MRS. WINSLOW

Not at all.— Are you feeling better, dear child?

NANCY

Like a girl again. What a pretty room!—And what nice-looking people in it! (*She goes to* AUGUSTA.) Augusta! It's been centuries! (*They kiss.*) How are you bearing up?

AUGUSTA

The sight of you almost revives me.

NANCY

If I had your looks, seven devils couldn't down me— (*MUFF comes in again.*) Here, little Muffin— come and kiss your old Auntie— (*They embrace.*) Honestly, Mrs. Winslow—you don't know what a joy it is to see this idiot again. (*She turns to* ALAN.) Hello, Alan!

ALAN

Ah! you've recognized me.

NANCY

Two years, and not one wrinkle! You know, you and Augusta are upsetting the conventions of a confirmed spinster.

ALAN

Still confirmed?

NANCY

More so!—Muff—the brothers—quick! Which is which?

MUFF (*indicating*)

Oliver—

[OLIVER *advances and shakes* NANCY'S hand *heartily*.

NANCY

How do you do, Oliver?

OLIVER

How do you do? We're so pleased that you've come just at this time. It's really the loveliest season of the year, for us.

NANCY

It seems perfect. I may settle here.

MUFF

—And Mark.

MARK (*bowing*)

Delighted, I'm sure. We count ourselves most fortunate, to have such a charming house-guest.

NANCY

How like your pictures, Mark. (*to* MRS. WINSLOW:)

I'm afraid I've brought my dog with me. Will you ever forgive me?

MRS. WINSLOW (*bravely*)

We all love animals. Richard's pets have the run of the house.

NANCY

There! I knew there was a Richard! —Where do you hide him, Muff?

MUFF

Oh—he's upstairs—

ALAN

He'll probably be right down.

MARK

Sure—Richard'll be down.

AUGUSTA

Any minute. . . .

MRS. WINSLOW

Poor Richard!

[NANCY *glances at her quickly.*

NANCY (*slightly embarrassed*)

Oh—er—hasn't he been well?

MUFF

Quite. It's just as I've always told you: They—

OLIVER

He's a little odd, that's all.

MARK

You mustn't mind if he acts queerly when he first meets you.

OLIVER

It's just his way—quaint, you know.

NANCY

I see.—But I like quaint things. I'm forever collecting them.

MRS. WINSLOW

Oh—er—is your dog a very large one?

NANCY

About the size of most bloodhounds.

MRS. WINSLOW (*to OLIVER*)

Bloodhounds!

NANCY

That's half their charm, being such a shock. They're really the gentlest of all creatures. Eustace cats nothing but cereals.

MRS. WINSLOW

No? How—how interesting. (*a brief pause. Then:*)  
I—er—I hope you're planning to spend some time with us?

NANCY

Till the Fourth, if I may.

MUFF

You try to get away that soon!

MRS. WINSLOW

Oh, yes—you must stay till after the—er—the Fourth of July. It is quite an occasion for us. The townspeople always come up here at noon—out of respect to my husband's grandfather.



NANCY (*tenderly*)

The dear old gentleman, he must enjoy that.

[MUFF *whoops*.

MRS. WINSLOW

Martha! (*to NANCY, gently.*) He went to his reward in 1878.

NANCY

I beg your pardon.

MRS. WINSLOW

You didn't know.

OLIVER

—Out of respect to his memory.

NANCY

Of course.

ALAN

How about a swim before dinner, Nancy?

NANCY

I'm afraid the effect would be too—er—superficial.

ALAN (*puzzled*)

What?

NANCY

The dust on these roads of yours! (*She smiles.*) I want soap, hot water, and a very large scrubbing-brush.

OLIVER

Ha—ha! That's one on me, isn't it, Mother?

ALAN

He's head of the Road Commission, big strapping boy that he is.

OLIVER

But you see, with an average mean-rainfall here of one inch and three-eighths during the months of June, July and August, all roads are—

MARK (*interrupting*)

We'd better be dressing.

OLIVER

Right. (*to NANCY.*) All roads are—

AUGUSTA

It's after seven—

OLIVER

*All* roads are—

NANCY

—Of course they are! What can one expect with such perfectly splendid mean-rainfall?

OLIVER

Exactly.

ALAN (*to AUGUSTA*)

Come along, dear. There's time for a dive or two, anyway. (*to OLIVER.*) Oh—do you want that will of your father's now?

OLIVER

What? No—send it to the safe-deposit. (*to NANCY.*) However, the roads here are—

ALAN

I hope it doesn't give your new lawyer the shock it did me. I think I'd stay in Richard's good graces awhile if I were you.

OLIVER (*puzzled*)

What's that?

[*But ALAN has gone out.*]

MARK

It's after seven.

OLIVER (*to NANCY*)

As I was saying, the roads here are—

[*RICHARD enters from the hall. He does not see NANCY, who stands behind OLIVER.*]

RICHARD (*to the family*)

Well, it's all ready for her. But I'd suggest a lady's maid and some soft cushions and chocolates and cheap novels and—

MRS. WINSLOW

Richard!

RICHARD

—And maybe a couple of eunuchs at the door—  
(*MUFF rises, quickly.*)—so that—

AUGUSTA

Of all the disgusting—

MARK (*simultaneously*)

Look here, you—

OLIVER (*simultaneously*)

That's enough!

RICHARD

—So that when your sap-headed little social celebrity arrives, she won't lose her sense of importance.

MRS. WINSLOW (*to NANCY, with a nervous laugh*)

Really, I—

OLIVER

Richard!

RICHARD

—Also, you might scatter a few butlers and footmen around, to impress her with—

[*Suddenly he sees NANCY. Their eyes meet. He stares at her for a moment, then turns sharply and goes out the French Window. ALAN chuckles. Then there is an awkward pause, finally broken by NANCY.*]

NANCY

Isn't he sweet?

MARK

Yes, isn't he!

[*OLIVER, goes to NANCY, as if to explain, but thinks better of it, nods his head to her solemnly several times, and follows RICHARD out.*]

MARK (*to NANCY*)

If you'll excuse us a moment—we have something to do.

[*He follows OLIVER out.*]

AUGUSTA (*to MUFF and NANCY*)

Dinner's at seven-thirty, you two.

[*She goes out one of the French Windows, and ALAN follows her.*]

MRS. WINSLOW

I'm afraid we must apologize for my youngest son's lack of—

NANCY

Oh; no! Please!

MRS. WINSLOW

He is such a strange child. I—er—I must see that your room's not all sixes and sevens.

[*She goes out into the hall. MUFF and NANCY are left alone. MUFF disgustedly flops herself down upon the sofa.*]

MUFF

Lord! Again!

NANCY

—Are they really on his neck every minute?

MUFF

Twice a minute. Half the time he's afraid to call his soul his own.

NANCY

Well, I call it rotten unfair. (*She looks at the portrait over the mantel.*) Is that great-grandfather?

MUFF

—So do I. What? Yes. His name's Jabez.

NANCY

—Sweet name. I hate unfairness.

MUFF

“You'll see plenty of it here, my precious. (*She rises.*) Come along—

NANCY

Don't rush me. I'm thinking.— I suppose every big family has its victim . . .

MUFF

Are you thanking your stars you're an only child?

NANCY

No—but people are so stupid! They don't realize that people actually turn out to be the sort of creatures they treat them as.

MUFF

—You don't really believe that.

NANCY

I do! Treat a mouse like a lion—he'll grow a mane over'night.

MUFF

Come on—let's dress.

[NANCY *takes off her coat and hat.*]

NANCY

—Take me, for instance: What if everyone hadn't always been so nice to me? I'd probably be a snivelling little idiot.

MUFF

—Instead of this choice confection we now behold.— That's a pretty model, that dress—do you mind if I have it copied?

NANCY

Muff, I'm serious! (*A brief pause.*) But every now and then I get a streak of thinking.— It's sinful to be as happy as I am, without doing anything about

the people who aren't. And when you wrote me about poor Richard cutting away from this only to be dragged back into it again—well, of course I did want to see *you*—but—

MUFF

Do you want six hundred nice pounds of family on your neck?

NANCY

Oh, I can manage them.

MUFF

Can you, though! You've got yourself in pretty deep before you know, with this salvation-stuff.

NANCY

—If you mean that wretched Maloney woman—that was all a misunderstanding.

MUFF

Oh yes!

NANCY (*rising*)

Now if you'll kindly produce the dear boy—

MUFF

Nancy, do be sensible!

NANCY

I shall treat him as if he were the most important member of this family. Soon he'll believe he is—and at that moment he will be!

MUFF

Simple little formula, isn't it?

NANCY

In a few days I can make him over.

MUFF

But that's just what he hates!

NANCY

He won't know it's happening.

MUFF

Child! You haven't changed a particle.

NANCY

You don't think I can do it?

MUFF

No, I certainly do not.

NANCY

Any bets?

MUFF

Sure—anything you say.

NANCY

Ten dollars he'll be on top in a week.

MUFF

Make it twenty!

NANCY

Reckless infant—twenty it is.

MUFF

Done! Nancy—if you *knew* this family.

NANCY

Is it organized?



MUFF

Like a bank.

NANCY

Hasn't Richard any money of his own?

MUFF

Not a sou—beyond a tiny allowance.

NANCY

Money *is* important. (*A brief pause.*) —Did I say a week?

MUFF

You did. Also twenty dollars.

NANCY

Then there's no time to lose. Go get him. Send him in to me.

MUFF

I'll do nothing of the sort.

NANCY

Alan, then.

MUFF

Nor Alan either. Now you come along, if you want a scrub before dinner.

NANCY

You take it for me.

MUFF

That once beautiful face of yours—really, I can't see it for dust.

NANCY

You're lying!

MUFF

It's just one huge black smudge. (*NANCY quickly goes out Right. MUFF laughs and follows.*) Pumice-stone—water'll never do it!

[*For a moment the room is empty. Then RICHARD comes in the French Window with a small yellow-and-white kitten in his arms. Presently NANCY is heard from the hall:*

NANCY

My bag—I'm sure I had it with me—

[*RICHARD slouches down into an armchair, completely concealing himself from NANCY, who enters, takes her hand-bag from the table and is about to go out again, when RICHARD suddenly jumps up, startling her considerably.*

NANCY (*at the door*)

Oh, good grief! You shouldn't do that!

RICHARD

I—I can do what I like.

NANCY

Few of us are so fortunate.

RICHARD

N-N-N-Napoleon did what he l-l-l-liked.

NANCY

Ah, but look where he ended!

[*She closes the door and moves toward him.*

RICHARD

Wh—what does that—p—p— (*He whistles.*)  
—prove?

NANCY

It's only a warning.

RICHARD

Humph!

NANCY

You're Richard, aren't you?

RICHARD

Who—s-s-said I w-w-wasn't?

NANCY

I'm Nancy Blake.

RICHARD

I n-n-n-n-n-know who you a-a-re.

NANCY (*thoughtfully*)

You're not over-gracious to your guest.

RICHARD

M-m-maybe I sh-should fall down and w-w-worship.

NANCY (*interestedly*)

Do you stutter all the time?

RICHARD

I can stop when I like.

[NANCY laughs. RICHARD still has the kitten in his arms. She extends a hand toward it.]

NANCY

Oh—what an absorbing kitten!

RICHARD

It's not a kitten.

NANCY

No?

RICHARD

It's a Polar bear cub.

NANCY

Aw, let me hold it.

RICHARD (*turning away*)

No you don't! (*He goes to the French Window, puts the kitten outside, then turns and looks at her. NANCY seats herself, smiles engagingly, and finally he smiles in return.*) —They told you I was a little odd, didn't they? Well—I thought I'd be good and odd.

NANCY

It's your room I'm to have, isn't it?

RICHARD

One of my rooms.

NANCY

I'm sure it's the favorite one. It's awfully generous of you. I admire generosity. I think it requires a truly great soul to be generous with anything so intimate as a room.

RICHARD

Oh—that's—that's all right.

NANCY

I'm going to like you very much.

RICHARD

You're not so bad as I thought you'd be.

NANCY

You'll think better of me when I've had a bath.

RICHARD

There's a celluloid duck in the tub. Her name's Millicent. Hold her under and then let her go. Sometimes she jumps two inches out of water.

NANCY

Oh—speaking of pets—does your dog object to dining with other dogs?

RICHARD (*delightedly*)

You haven't got a *dog*?

NANCY

I've got six—but only one with me.

RICHARD

What make?

NANCY

Bloodhound. His name is Eustace.

RICHARD

Why?

NANCY

I don't know. Why's the duck's name Millicent?

RICHARD

I don't know, either.

NANCY

Well—there you are.

RICHARD

Where is he?

NANCY

Eustace? In the kitchen, I think. (*He makes an involuntary movement toward the door.*) Would you rather see Eustace than me?

RICHARD

Much.

NANCY

You're awfully spoiled, aren't you?

RICHARD

Spoiled—?

NANCY

I suppose because you're a writer, the whole household revolves around *you*.

RICHARD

Oh, they go along pretty much as they like.

NANCY

Yes! I've seen writer's families before! —But I like spoiled people. I'm one myself. You're the most interesting man I've met in a year.

RICHARD

You're all right, too.

NANCY

Thanks.— I do love flattery.— Oh, Muff said something about a dance at the Golf Club tonight . . . (*A slight pause.*) Would you condescend to take me?

RICHARD

Why—I—I've got to—that is—I've made other plans.

NANCY

—And, as usual, it's *your* plans that are important.

RICHARD

Why—if only—

NANCY (*rising*)

Oh, I shouldn't dream of upsetting anything so vital.  
[ALAN *enters through the French Window.*

ALAN (*to RICHARD*)

Noll called down to me he's got a letter for you to post.

RICHARD

I guess it can wait.

ALAN

He said he wanted it mailed right away.

RICHARD

Well, he can—

ALAN

Better step, son—better step.

[RICHARD *hesitates a moment, then moves toward the door.*

RICHARD (*uncertainly*)

I'll—er—I'll see if it's important— (*to NANCY.*)  
Excuse me?

[*She smiles. He goes out.*

NANCY (*to ALAN*)

Does he always do as he's told, like that?

ALAN

Sooner or later. He has to.

NANCY

Alan, we two know each other pretty well, don't we?

ALAN (*smiling*)

We sailed boats together in Central Park.

NANCY

Then surely we needn't bother with preliminaries now.— I need help. Will you promise to help me?

ALAN

Why, of course. What's the—?

NANCY

It's just that I can't go merrily along and let a sweet boy like Richard endure the torment he does.

ALAN

Oh—. (*A pause.*) If you don't mind my saying so, I think there are enough people mixing in Richard's destiny already.

NANCY

In the wrong way, yes. *I* shall—

ALAN

It's the interference itself he resents. I'd let him be, Nancy.

NANCY

Before I leave, he'll be on top of the lot of them.



ALAN

What's this? !

NANCY

—I can't stay long, so there's no time to fool with half-measures. I want a downright blow-up as quickly as possible. Can you suggest a way to get it?

ALAN

One occurs here on an average of twice a day.

NANCY

I mean a real one. Can't we trot out the family skeleton?

ALAN

I don't think there is one.

NANCY

How absurd! We have three. (*She thinks a moment. Then:*) —Blackmail! I've always had great faith in blackmail. Oliver's old enough to have had a past. Has he one?

ALAN

Like a prayer-book.

NANCY

They make me sick—. (*a pause.*) How about his father's will?

ALAN

What do you know about that?

NANCY

Only what I heard you say to what's-his-name—  
Oliver.

[ALAN *studies her a moment.*

ALAN

Well, there's nothing up *that* alley.

NANCY

There isn't?

ALAN

Not a thing. Honestly, Nancy, I advise you not to fool with this family. It's loaded.

NANCY

Then there *is* something up that alley! *What*, Alan?

ALAN

Well—er—

NANCY

Stupid! Don't take so long!

ALAN

Well, in clearing the title to some property Mrs. Winslow sold, I discovered that her husband's will was made some eleven months before Richard was born.

NANCY (*eagerly*)

Could he break it, then?— Of course! Oh, marvelous, Alan!

ALAN

You don't know anything about it. As a matter of fact, he wouldn't *have* to break it.

NANCY

Oh, you *lovely* man! *Why* wouldn't he?

ALAN

Although everything was left outright to the widow, there's a New York State statute that says a child born after a will is made inherits just as if there hadn't been any will.

NANCY

Then he'd get something? Oh, I'm shaking all over. Alan— (*He looks at her inquiringly. She shakes her head decisively.*) I want a clear week to see what kindness and understanding will do. Then, if we need to take this charming little advantage, it's awfully nice to know we can do it.

ALAN (*rising*)

But my dear girl, I tell you—

NANCY (*rising*)

“But, but, but!”—Alan, you promised!

ALAN

But I didn't expect—

NANCY

But you promised unconditionally!

ALAN

All right—only I've an idea that some day you're going to get in a little *too* deep, young lady.

NANCY (*eagerly*)

*Will* there be tight corners to get out of, do you think? Splendid! There's nothing like them on earth, to keep you thin. (*AUGUSTA comes in from the hall, dressed for dinner. NANCY hastily goes out past her.*) I shan't be a minute, really!

AUGUSTA

Don't hurry!

ALAN

Darling—seriously—don't you think we've stood these family rows long enough?

AUGUSTA

We'll look for a house again next week. You know there isn't a thing we can afford anywhere close by.

ALAN

Then let's go across the river.

AUGUSTA

But, my dear—that's the wrong side of town!

ALAN

Well, what of it?

AUGUSTA

Things like that are important, here.

*[She removes flowers from a vase on the piano and wraps them in a newspaper.]*

ALAN

Less important, perhaps, than—

*[He stops as RICHARD enters from the porch window at Right. He wears his hat and is smoking his pipe. When he sees AUGUSTA he flings his hat on the sofa and eagerly goes to her.]*

RICHARD

'Gusta!—What do you say to this as an idea for a story—a novel, maybe: There's a girl who's always had everything she wants. *You'd* call her spoiled, I suppose. But in *her* case it's—

AUGUSTA

Tell me when I've had something to eat, will you?  
[*She picks up the package of flowers, goes to the French Window, Right, and out. OLIVER enters, also dressed for dinner and is followed by MARK, who bears down upon RICHARD and removes the pipe unceremoniously from his mouth.*

MARK

Don't you know that's forbidden in here? Why aren't you dressed?

RICHARD (*picks up the vase from the piano*)

You give me that pipe, or I'll just simply drown you! Give it here. (*MARK returns the pipe to him.*)  
I'll smoke where I like, and I'll dress as I like, see?

MARK

Someone's been feeding him meat.  
[*RICHARD replaces the vase and goes on smoking. AUGUSTA comes in from the porch and MUFF, in evening clothes, from the hall. MRS. WINSLOW, also in evening clothes, follows MUFF in, and seats herself.*

OLIVER (*as he tears out the cheques*)

Here's your cheque, Muff.

[*AUGUSTA advances for hers, MUFF follows. RICHARD goes to the piano and runs his fingers over the keys.*

MUFF (*accepting her cheque*)

Oh, thanks, Noll. (*She looks at it.*) Wheeee! You're a brick.

OLIVER

Don't thank me. Thank Mother. (*He goes to MRS.*

WINSLOW *and presents a cheque to her.*) Here you are, you young spendthrift.

MRS. WINSLOW

Thank you, dear boy.

OLIVER

Don't you give it away, now! (OLIVER *turns to* RICHARD.) Richard—

[RICHARD *goes to him and receives a cheque.* OLIVER *gives* AUGUSTA *hers and* MARK *his.* They murmur "Thanks." RICHARD *glances at his, and looks first surprised, then dismayed.*

RICHARD

Look here, Oliver—this is wrong. It's only *half*.

OLIVER

We have decided that you must be limited to this until you are more amenable to our ideas of what is best for you.

[RICHARD *looks at the faces around him, one at a time.* Only MARK and AUGUSTA *meet his gaze,* MRS. WINSLOW *looks away.* MUFF *turns away.*

RICHARD

I call this a rotten deal—very rotten—

OLIVER

It's for your own good.

RICHARD

Everything disagreeable that's done to me is.

MARK

It's about time you learned that to have money you must earn it, as we do.

RICHARD

*You earn your allowance?*

OLIVER

Mark and I draw very nominal salaries, as a matter of policy. What Mother gives us is to make up the difference. I've told you that time and again.

RICHARD

No—that's why you've always got so much *more* than me.

MRS. WINSLOW (*mildly*)

But Richard—

MARK

You've been out of college for nearly a year without doing a stroke of work.

RICHARD

I put in eight to ten hours a day writing and studying. What do you call that?

MARK

A child could write your sort of stuff.

RICHARD

Is that so? Maybe *you* could?

MARK

With ease, my boy.

OLIVER

How much has it paid you?

RICHARD (*with infinite scorn*)

Oh—*money*—

MARK

What's money to we artists?

RICHARD

About what grammer is to you pin-makers! (*to OLIVER.*) Pins!— Why should I go into the pin business with you? I wouldn't care if I never *saw* another pin.

MUFF

Well, a safety-one *might* make your pants hang better, darling.

AUGUSTA

You know Mother offered to put you through Law School.

RICHARD

That's what *she* wants. I want to write!

MARK

Everything you've ever written has been refused.

RICHARD

Well, it takes time, just like everything else does.

OLIVER

Too *much* time.

MRS. WINSLOW

When Oliver was your age he had been in business four years.

RICHARD

Yes—and done what? Lost more than a third of all Father left!



MARK

Noll was a very young man at the time.

OLIVER

—And there happened to be a panic.

MRS. WINSLOW

He had to learn how to manage in such crises.

RICHARD

He had to learn his *business*! So do I!

MARK

He calls writing a business.

OLIVER

Oh, let him rave.

RICHARD

Can't you even *understand* a person *wanting* to be anything but a big frog in this little puddle?

MARK

Our baby is ambitious.

RICHARD

I hate people who keep trying to make other people over. Conceited, meddling busybodies. You think you're doing it out of kindness, don't you? Well, you're doing it just to make your own sweet selves feel more important.

AUGUSTA

—Grateful for the pains we've taken over him, isn't he?

RICHARD

Mother—for twenty-two years now I've been treated like a hunk of putty—

OLIVER

Oh, I guess you haven't been treated so badly. You've got a good job offered you. Do your writing in the evenings. What do you say?

RICHARD

Suppose it was the other way around? Suppose you two wanted to make pins and I wanted you to write. What if I said, "Make your pins in the evenings."  
[MARK and OLIVER look at each other and laugh.]

OLIVER

Don't be ridiculous.

RICHARD

You'd see, quick enough, how—

OLIVER

Don't be ridiculous! (*Murmurs.*) How silly—make pins in the evening.

RICHARD

I'll—I'll go off somewhere by myself—

AUGUSTA

—And worry Mother sick again, eh?

RICHARD

It's *you* who worried her sick with all your lies—telling her I was starving and all that. I'd have managed—if you hadn't come after me with all your soft talk and promises and reproaches about breaking her heart—

MRS. WINSLOW

Richard, I—

RICHARD

I'm sorry, Mother—but you don't know—you just don't know. (*To OLIVER.*) You shouldn't do this. I've got a right to be what I want to be—and I *could* be, too, if you'd all just let me alone— (*He averts his head.*) Oh, if only you'd let me *alone*!

MARK

Well, it's nothing to weep over.

RICHARD

If I wanted to be disagreeable the whole time, the way *you* are, I wouldn't have to stand it— (*MARK groans.*) I tell you I wouldn't.

OLIVER (*good-naturedly*)

Then, if you're so oppressed, why on earth don't you be?

[*There is a pause. RICHARD looks directly at him, then a spasm of pain crosses his face. He bites his lips and turns away once more.*

RICHARD (*barely audibly*)

Because I—don't want to be—see?

MARK

Ho! Ho! Ho! Pretty thin—pret-ty thin!

MRS. WINSLOW

Please, children, please! What will Nancy think?

MUFF (*to OLIVER and MARK*)

Which of you'll take her to the dance tonight? I want the other for myself—

[*MARK and OLIVER look inquiringly at each other.*

MARK *flips a coin, catches it on the back of his hand and covers it with his other hand.*

OLIVER (*rising*)

Tails. (MARK *uncovers the coin.* OLIVER *looks at it and laughs.*) Too bad!

[ALAN *comes in from the hall.*

MRS. WINSLOW

I'd rather it were Oliver. He's the older and people will expect—

MUFF

It *is* Oliver, Mother.

OLIVER

—Rather pleasant, sauntering into the ballroom with such a stunning importation.

RICHARD

Yes—you'll look even more like a pompous old dowager.

MARK

Hush, hush, Dickie-bird—you mustn't say naughty things, or Mildred won't like you.

RICHARD (*disgustedly*)

Mildred!

[MARK *laughs.* NANCY, *in evening clothes, enters from the hall.*

NANCY

Of course, I'm not *late*.

[MRS. WINSLOW, MARK, *and* OLIVER *rise.*

OLIVER

Not at all.

[RICHARD *rises and goes to the window.* NANCY *watches him.*

NANCY

Oh—that's *good* of you . . .

AUGUSTA

We were just discussing the dance tonight.

OLIVER

—And we're very anxious to have you see the Club.  
They say there's nothing finer, even on Long Island.

NANCY

I'm sure there's not.

MARK

At least there *won't* be—with *you* there.

NANCY

I think you'll be a great comfort, Mark.— Hi,  
Richard!

RICHARD

'Lo, Nancy . . .

NANCY

Millicent wouldn't jump worth a hoot.

[*All look at her, puzzled.*

RICHARD

You need deeper water.

MARK

Oh—you've met—

NANCY

Just informally.

[KATIE, a maid, enters from the dining-room at Left.

KATIE (*to* MRS. WINSLOW)

Dinner is served, Mrs. Winslow.

[*She goes out again and there is a general movement toward the dining-room, led by* MRS. WINSLOW.

MRS. WINSLOW

Dinner is served, children.

OLIVER (*to* NANCY)

Speaking of tonight, the lucky toss of a coin gives me the honor of taking you to—

RICHARD (*interrupting quickly*)

Oh, by the way, Nancy—I can manage about this evening all right.

NANCY

—But the other plans—that you said were so—vital?

RICHARD

Let 'em go.

OLIVER

I was saying, I'm to have the honor of taking you to the dance tonight.

NANCY

That's awfully nice—but would you believe it?—I've already promised Richard.

[MUFF *laughs with joy*, OLIVER *stares and* MARK *scowls at* RICHARD.

MRS. WINSLOW

But—but—

NANCY

You hadn't made different arrangements, Mrs. Winslow?

MRS. WINSLOW

Why—er—

MUFF

Oh, no—of course not.

MRS. WINSLOW

No, indeed—no, indeed. (*to MARK and OLIVER.*) Then one of you will have to take Mildred.

OLIVER *and* MARK (*together*)

Yes, Mother—

[RICHARD *laughs lightly, and is glared at by all but* NANCY, MUFF *and* ALAN. MRS. WINSLOW *goes out into the dining-room.* AUGUSTA *and* ALAN *follow*; MUFF, *laughing, goes to* NANCY, *takes her hand and they move toward the door, NANCY preceding her out.* OLIVER *and* MARK *go last.* RICHARD *brings up the rear.*

RICHARD

Lucky Mildred. (MARK *and* OLIVER *turn on him.*) Won't she be pleased, though! (*then solemnly.*) But I like this spirit of friendly competition, boys. (OLIVER *and* MARK *start for the dining-room,* RICH-

ARD follows close behind them.) All I can say is: may the best man— (*He pats them on the back simultaneously as they pass through the door, one with his right hand, the other with his left.*) —win.  
[*They go out and he follows.*

*Curtain*



## ACT TWO

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## ACT TWO

*Scene: The Porch. It is moderately deep, and the back wall is the reverse of the living-room wall, with French Windows on either side of the fireplace-chimney, opening into the living-room. At Left, a few stone steps lead down into the garden. Both Right and Left sides of the porch are railinged and awninged. Wicker furniture and a comfortable upholstered hammock comprise the furniture.*

*Time: Just before noon, a week later: the Fourth of July.*

*At Rise: NANCY, in a morning-dress, is seated in the hammock, deep in thought. ALAN'S coat is over a chair at Left. After a moment MUFF enters from the French Window, with a large piece of toast in her mouth, a coffee-cup perilously balanced in one hand, and a leather case of manicuring implements under her arm.*

MUFF (*to NANCY*)

Bless the girl! I thought you were still asleep.

[*She seats herself facing her.*]

NANCY

I am, practically.—Where's the family—all out decorating?

MUFF

If you mean Richard, he's still in bed.

NANCY

That sounds like progress, doesn't it?

MUFF

—More like a collapse from exhaustion.

NANCY

We've been in before two every night. Two's not so wicked.

MUFF

—Not with Mark or Noll; with Richard it's plain dissolute. Ugh! This coffee's been made for hours—  
[*She opens her toilet case and begins to file her nails.*]

NANCY

Poor lamb! It's the first chance he's ever had to get a word in edgewise.

MUFF

A lot of good it'll do him.

NANCY

Oh, Muff, he does *need* kindness so!

[*MARK enters from the house, carrying four camp-chairs. He regards MUFF's manicuring implements with abhorrence.*]

MARK

I think that occupation is best confined to the boudoir.

MUFF (*so sweetly*)

The hell you say.

[*She continues to file.*]

MARK

Good morning, Nancy.

NANCY

Good morning.

MARK

*I call this a day, don't you?*

NANCY

Heavenly. Doesn't it make you just want to be kind to everyone?

[MUFF *chuckles knowingly.*]

MARK

It certainly does.

[*He glances significantly at MUFF, and receives an aggravating smile in return.*]

NANCY (*sighing*)

I wish someone would be to *me*—

MARK

What?

NANCY

—If only I had someone to turn to—but there's no one—no one.

MUFF

Poor girl.

[MARK *scowls at her, then, softly, to NANCY:*

MARK

I have the honor to be at your service always.

NANCY

I need help *so* much—

MARK

Try to tell me—

MUFF

Give me but a word—a sign!

[MARK opens his mouth to retort, then decides that the best method with MUFF is one of cold disregard.]

NANCY

I—I suppose it *is* rather indirectly, though.

MARK

That doesn't matter.

NANCY

Doesn't it?

MARK

Not a bit.

NANCY (*slowly*)

I—suppose—the *real* need—would appear to be—  
Richard's . . .

MARK (*chilling*)

Oh!

[MUFF laughs.]

NANCY

You see?— It has to be entirely personal. (*She throws up her hands.*) Oh, men—men!

MARK

But I didn't say I wouldn't—

NANCY (*cynically*)

Thanks just the same, Mark.

MARK

Now really—what have I said?

NANCY (*softening*)

Well—I *was* going to ask you if you'd mind being kind to Richard for the next few days. . . .

MARK

Why, really, I wasn't aware that I—

NANCY (*quickly*)

I know. *I* meant to make a point of being more than usually so—whatever he does, or however irritating he may be. Richard is in trouble, Mark.

MARK (*almost in a whisper*)

What's he done?—

NANCY

The trouble is more—er—mental.

MARK (*disappointed*)

Oh!

NANCY

He is an exceedingly sensitive boy on the brink of a great transition in his life.

MARK

You mean getting this crazy writing-bee out of his bonnet?

NANCY

—I hardly know. But he needs helping hands.— My little hand—

*[She looks at the lovely, helpless thing and drops it into her lap, with a sad, wistful smile and a shake of her head. MARK at once becomes as clay in that hand.]*

MARK

So *that's* why the rest of us have seen so little of you!

*[NANCY looks away, self-consciously.]*

MUFF

A great relief to your pride, eh, Mark?

NANCY

You'll help me help him, won't you, Mark? Your kindness will be such a charity. It will make a man of him—perhaps even a business-man.

MUFF (*to MARK*)

Nancy's formula is so charmingly simple: "Treat a mouse like a lion—he'll grow a mane over night."

NANCY

I've got no formula whatsoever. I'm simply—

MUFF

Do you want to make it fifty, Nancy?



NANCY

Muff's apparently trying to be funny.

MARK

With her usual success.

ALAN'S VOICE (*off Left*)

Mark!

MARK

Yes.

ALAN

Where are those chairs?

MARK

Coming right away! (*then, to NANCY:*) You can count on me, my dear.

NANCY

That means a great deal to me, Mark, in many, many ways.

MARK

You have only to command me, Nancy.

MUFF

Speak, Eustace—speak!

[MARK bows slightly to NANCY and murmurs.

MARK

Till later—

[He goes off Left with the chairs, looking daggers at MUFF.

NANCY

Well, *you* were a great help, weren't you?

[MUFF laughs.

MUFF

Shall we make it fifty?

NANCY

Yes!

MUFF

Good!

NANCY

Only you keep out, hear?

MUFF

You don't think I'm mercenary enough to make it *harder* for you, darling? Oh, no.

NANCY

No, I suppose not! Never mind—when the crash comes, you'll go under with the rest of them.

MUFF

When's it due? I seem to remember some talk about "one week"—

NANCY

Till six-thirty tonight!

MUFF

—About six hours—you'll have to rustle for that fifty.

NANCY

I intend to!

[ALAN comes in *Left from the garden, coatless, and mopping his brow.*

ALAN

Hello!

MUFF

Happy Fourth of July!

[NANCY *rises*.

ALAN

Hot Fourth of July, anyway. (*He calls off Left:*)  
Tell him to straighten that ninth row!

NANCY

Muff—go find Richard, will you?

MUFF (*rising*)

Are you sure you don't need me here?

[NANCY *points to the French Window*.

MARK'S VOICE (*off Left*)

Is that all right?

ALAN (*at the railing*)

Fine! Then your mother wants a man at the tent.  
Some of the stakes need tightening. Is Richard  
around?

MARK'S VOICE

Never mind. I'll be glad to go myself.

[ALAN *turns wonderingly*.

ALAN

Well, what's come over him?

MUFF

Alan, doesn't this heavenly day just make you want  
to be kind to everyone?

ALAN

It does not. (*He takes his coat from the chair and  
puts it on.*) You look rather worried, Nancy.

NANCY

I'm beginning to see that a man's greatest victory may be over his own family.

ALAN

Yes—and *I* advise you to call it quits.

[NANCY *smiles confidently*. AUGUSTA *comes in from the garden wearing a sun-hat and a pair of old gloves*. MARK *follows her*.]

AUGUSTA

We've all worked ourselves lame. Where's that wretched infant? (*To MUFF.*) Couldn't you find him? [OLIVER *enters from the house with a small package of American flags*.]

MUFF

He isn't up yet.

AUGUSTA

What!

[OLIVER *gives MUFF the package of flags*.]

OLIVER

Take these out to Mother, Muff— (*He looks back into the living-room, calling:*) Oh, Katie! 'Here a minute! (*KATIE appears in the window, carrying a breakfast-tray in some disorder.*) What have you got there?

KATIE

Mr. Richard's breakfast-tray.

OLIVER (*incredulously*)

His breakfast-tray—?!

MARK

Poor kid, probably all tired out.

[*OLIVER looks at him, amazed.*

OLIVER (*to AUGUSTA*)

Hasn't he been helping you and Mother?

AUGUSTA

He *has* not.

MARK

Well, we managed all right without him.

MUFF

Mark's one regret is not to have been there to butter his little toast for him.

[*She looks from MARK to NANCY and goes out into garden, Left.*

OLIVER

He had his breakfast in *bed*?

KATIE

By the window—in your blue silk wrapper, Mr. Mark—

[*MARK starts angrily, catches NANCY's eye and recovers himself, smiling broadly. KATIE goes out.*

*OLIVER's mouth sets.*

AUGUSTA

I don't know *what's* got into him. (*She goes into the house.*)

MARK

Oh, let him alone, Augusta. He's welcome to that old rag if he wants it. (*He glances at NANCY, who smiles her thanks, then he calls after AUGUSTA.*) Augusta—!

Augusta! Let him alone! (OLIVER glances at NANCY, nods his head decisively, and goes out into the house, MARK following.) Wait a minute, Noll! There's no sense in riding the kid *all* the time. (NANCY smiles.) Noll—Noll!

NANCY. (*to ALAN*)

Well—the time has come.

ALAN

You wait a minute, Nancy. If—

NANCY

The time has come.

[*He looks at her, finds no quarter, and shrugs helplessly.*]

ALAN

If he discovers that you're maneuvering him, too, when you're the first person in whom he's ever had the slightest confidence—

NANCY

I know. He won't discover it. Alan, you must tell him the moment he comes down. Naturally, he won't take all they've got and *keep* it—but he *may* threaten to—that's all *I* want!

ALAN

Remember that if he should—and get beaten at it, it'd be the last straw, the very last.

NANCY

But he might *win* a *real* fight! It's the little ones that are so easy to lose. I'll go up now. They won't dare make a scene if I'm there. Breakfast in bed—heavens! What commandment does that break?

[*She goes into the house. After a thoughtful moment, ALAN goes up and takes two law books from the arm-chair. There is a thump as of someone jumping to the ground off Right, and RICHARD comes in from the garden.*]

ALAN

Well, where did *you* come from?

RICHARD

—Off the roof. It's a good jump. You must try it sometime. It gives you confidence in your diving.

ALAN

Richard, I've concluded that in this household, you and I represent the down-trodden minority.

RICHARD

I guess we do, all right.

ALAN

And our oppressors' main strength is money, isn't it?

RICHARD

I suppose it is. A fortune in pins! (*shortly.*) I wish the man who invented 'em hadn't ever lost that button.

ALAN

I think there's a way to knock the pins from under them.

RICHARD (*dully*)

Is there?

ALAN

The encounter would be very brief—and practically bloodless.

RICHARD

I wouldn't object to a little blood. (*a brief pause.*)

ALAN (*looking about him*)

Nice house of yours, this. (*no response from RICHARD.*) Lucky you weren't born a couple of years earlier.

RICHARD

Where's Nan—er—er my pup, Portly, d'you know?

ALAN

Lucky your father's lawyer chose the right time to die. Lucky the State protects a child born after a will is made.

RICHARD

What the devil are you talking about?

ALAN

Do you remember the date of your birth?

RICHARD

No.— It wasn't important.

[ALAN takes a legal paper from his pocket and indicates the date on it.]

ALAN

Look at the date here—

RICHARD

What's this, Father's will?

ALAN

It is.

RICHARD

Well, what about it?



ALAN (*gives him an open law book*)

Here's the statute.

RICHARD

The what?

ALAN

The statute.

RICHARD

The statute of whom?

[*He frowns over it, then looks at ALAN with wide, unbelieving eyes. ALAN gives him the other law book.*]

ALAN

—A few of the cases, with the decisions. See? Every one for the child.

RICHARD

What child?— Well, what's the joke? (*a brief pause.*)

ALAN

You poor kid—does there always have to be a joke somewhere?

RICHARD

—Generally is, where I'm concerned, isn't there?

ALAN

Well, for once it's on someone else. (RICHARD *looks at him searchingly.*)

RICHARD

But—but—*Alan*—this is ridiculous!

[*He closes the book and throws it on the hammock.*]

ALAN

'Think so?

RICHARD

—Or why didn't they discover it then?

ALAN

Because the will was so simple, I presume.

RICHARD

—And maybe I was too small to be noticed.

ALAN

Exactly. But they'll have trouble overlooking you *now*.

RICHARD

Find me that statute again. (ALAN *does so*. RICHARD *examines it again*.) I'm—I'm—it's sort of confusing, isn't it?

ALAN

Your father died—

RICHARD

I know! I know!

ALAN

—Leaving a wife, five children, and about six hundred thousand—

RICHARD

As much as that? (ALAN *nods*.)

ALAN

—With the widow's third out, your share would be one-fifth of the remaining two-thirds——

RICHARD

What do I do, multiply or divide?

ALAN (*smiling*)

In this case, you add— (*counting on his fingers:*)  
Plus interest for twenty-two years, plus your factory profits, plus the fact that the estate was diminished more than a third by losses in nineteen-seven and eight—

[RICHARD *looks about him fearfully.*

RICHARD

Sh-h-h! Don't plus so loud.

ALAN

Richard, you could clean them out right down to the last cent. And there'd be thousands still due you.

RICHARD

They owe me money?

ALAN

They do, and a lot of it.

RICHARD

Ha!

ALAN

As I remarked before, it's a nice house. The only fee I ask as your lawyer, is to be moved promptly out of it.

RICHARD

I don't blame you. But listen—if all this is true—you know—how much am I worth?

ALAN

Approximately four hundred thousand.

RICHARD

My God!— But listen: Father *left* everything to Mother.

ALAN

Of course. But by this technicality—

RICHARD

Oh, I couldn't do that— (*He closes the book.*)  
You *can't* do a thing like that to your own family—

ALAN

You *can*, well enough. The question is—

RICHARD

There's no question about it. Alan, you ought to be ashamed—

ALAN

Well, upon my word—

RICHARD

You really ought— (*again he looks fearfully about him.*) Besides, they'd raise the roof. Now look—you get this settled just as quietly as you can—give me something or other to sign—they needn't know about it till afterwards. I don't want to get them all worked up again—because—because I'm hoping they'll give me back my full allowance, see?  
[*A door closes inside the house.*]

ALAN

Do you *realize* what a chance you're losing?

RICHARD

Sh-h-h! —Look out! Here they come— (*rising, ALAN picks up the law books, and puts the will in his pocket.*) Remember—*quietly!* Don't let 'em get on to it.— They'll blame it on me, and I can't help when I was born.

[*He goes rapidly off Left into the garden.* ALAN looks after him, shaking his head. NANCY enters from house.

NANCY

Well?

ALAN

—Just as I told you. He won't even consider it.

NANCY

Is he afraid to?

ALAN

It's partly that, I suppose. (*He laughs pityingly.*)  
He doesn't want to endanger his poor little allowance.

NANCY

Don't—I could cry for him. Oh, that *devilish* family—  
I'll *make* him down them! I'll make *them* goad him  
him into it.

ALAN

The one way to get them to do a thing, is to advise  
them very firmly not to. That's *my* method.

NANCY

All right, use it. I'll use my own.—What allowance  
does he get?

ALAN

It used to be eighty a month. It's forty, now.

NANCY

When's it due?

ALAN

Why—er—tomorrow, I think.

NANCY

And what's the most precious thing in the world to him? His stories?

ALAN

I suppose they are—why?

NANCY (*reflectively*)

First—let's see what costs forty dollars that a well-brought-up girl can accept? (*OLIVER enters from the window, looking very much annoyed. He does not notice ALAN and NANCY. He comes along the porch and places a chair, with a bang, above the table.*)

Ouch!

[*ALAN turns and goes out.*]

OLIVER

It *is* annoying, you know.

NANCY

Couldn't you find him?

OLIVER

His door was locked and he wouldn't answer.

NANCY

Tsch—tsch.

OLIVER

It's not so much these constant petty annoyances as—er—my responsibility for his future.

NANCY

Of course— (*a brief pause.*) You know what? —*I* think you and Mark spoil him—with your kindness. [*He looks at her inquiringly.*]

OLIVER

Well— (*With a shallow laugh.*) He's the youngest, you know.

NANCY

All the more reason for discipline.

OLIVER

It's a problem!

NANCY

—Another case of too much money and too much leisure, isn't it?

OLIVER

Exactly.

NANCY

At his age oughtn't he to be thinking of going into business?

OLIVER

When I was his age I'd been at work four years.

NANCY

It's this crazy writing-bee, in his bonnet.

OLIVER

That's just it! (*a brief pause.*)

NANCY

Do you know what *I'd* do with him?

OLIVER

What?

NANCY

—For his own good, of course.

OLIVER

Yes, certainly—

NANCY (*firmly*)

First I'd stop his allowance—absolutely! Then if he was still troublesome, I'd tell him that I'd locked up all his books and manuscripts until he'd shown me he could earn his living like a man.

OLIVER

It's what he deserves. It might work, as a last resort.

NANCY

I wouldn't suggest it, if it weren't for knowing what a trial it must be for you all—to see one of you who doesn't—you know—measure up— (*MARK comes in from the house.*)

OLIVER

I'm glad you understand. (*to MARK*) Well?

MARK

If he wants to stay in there, why not let him?

OLIVER (*rises*)

Didn't I tell you to—

[*OLIVER stops and looks at NANCY, who tightens her fist, for his benefit. OLIVER nods his head to her, looks at MARK, then goes out into the house. MARK turns, goes up toward the window and turns again to NANCY with a helpless gesture.*]

NANCY

I *can't* account for Oliver's attitude.

MARK

Well—he's not going to bully the kid while I'm



around, I can tell you that! (*He follows OLIVER into the house, calling*) Noll!

[NANCY looks after him for a moment, then turns, smiling with satisfaction, murmuring "Forty dollars—forty dollars." After a moment RICHARD enters cautiously from the garden, gaining heart on finding that NANCY is alone.

NANCY

Well, I thought you'd never appear.

RICHARD

What time is it?

NANCY

Nearly twelve.

RICHARD

Wicked. (*He has his pipe.*) —I've been talking business with Alan—he's my lawyer, you know. (*He sits beside her upon the hammock and blows a great gust of smoke toward the ceiling.*) Awful bore on a holiday.

NANCY

It's a dog's life—this having responsibilities.

RICHARD

—I'm opposed to making even dogs do things they don't want to. When I try to get Eustace to beg on his hind legs and he won't, I give him the bone just the same. If I didn't, he'd have every right to my leg instead, wouldn't he?

NANCY

My dear, he'd faint at the very thought of it.

RICHARD

I said "a right to." —Then take my pup, Portly. Maybe I want him to play ball with me. But he spends a whole gorgeous day out in the meadow, stalking a beetle.

NANCY

—As the good Lord intended he should.

RICHARD

—As *he* intended he should. No interference. If he wants to go beetling, let him beetle. I appreciate the fact that our points of view differ.

NANCY

You're unusual, Richard—you really are.

RICHARD

Nope, I just have a proper respect for individual preference: hind legs, all fours—a ball or a beetle—let the dog decide.

NANCY

I'm very fond of Portly. I wonder if you could find another like him——

RICHARD

I'll get you his brother!

NANCY

Do they come very high?

RICHARD

I got Portly for three dollars.

NANCY (*disappointed*)

Oh—I thought he was—fifty at least. . . .

RICHARD

I can get his brother for two and his sister's only one  
—I'll give you both.

NANCY

No—no. On second thought, they probably wouldn't  
be like him at all. Thanks just the same.

[*A pause. Finally RICHARD speaks bravely and deliberately:*

RICHARD

—Nancy—I'll give you Portly himself.

NANCY (*genuinely touched*)

Oh, you *are* sweet.

RICHARD (*looking away*)

He's a *nice* little dog—

NANCY

I wouldn't think of taking him—

RICHARD

But I'd *like* you to—

NANCY

I wouldn't think of it!

RICHARD (*much relieved*)

Well—if you won't, you won't— Would you like a  
balloon instead? (*He detaches a balloon from the  
hammock and gives it to her.*) It's a great day here,  
you know. Balloons for the children, lemonade for  
the working-man—

NANCY

—Pleasure for all.—Why do they come here for it?

RICHARD

“Of all places” you mean?

NANCY

You know what I mean—the Celebration.

RICHARD

Great-Grandfather Winslow, born 1811, died 1878. Height, six feet two. Complexion, ruddy. Wives, three. Public offices, many.— Mayor, the first.

NANCY

He must have been a great buck in his day.

RICHARD (*affecting OLIVER's stiff voice*)

Jabez Winslow was a very notable figure in the City's early development. (*He laughs, and continues in his own tone:*) —And made a notable figure out of it—the old grafter. Fourth of July's a kind of annual coronation for the Royal House of Jabez. (NANCY *laughs.*) —You mustn't laugh, though—I did once— (*He pauses, reminiscently.*) You've probably noticed how hard they take their prominence—and when the bourgeoisie march up here from town to look upon the Lord's anointed, it's a ver-ry serious affair.

[NANCY *looks toward the table against the rail.*]

NANCY

—And of course Oliver makes a speech—

RICHARD

Reads it! Here— (*He takes the long scroll from the case on the table, unfurls it and indicates the old wooden ends.*) —These end-pieces belonged to Jabez himself: It's a good excuse for Noll—when he faces

a crowd his mind goes completely blank. But you've no idea how important the occasion is to him. It's another Gettysburg. For weeks afterward he can't pass a child on the street without stopping and putting his hand on his head and smiling kindly down at him. (*He scans the scroll.*) "Friends, we welcome you. On this auspicious occasion—" —They always begin, "On this auspicious occasion." (*He reads further*) "Industrial progress—Municipal Welfare"—factories—business, more factories, more business, bigger factories, bigger business, business, business, business.—Agh! (*in revulsion, he tosses the speech upon the hammock and goes to the table.*) —As if there wasn't too much business already. Smoke and steam and scurry and scamper—

NANCY

What the world needs, is less effort, and more fun.

RICHARD

—More leisure, fewer alarm clocks.

NANCY

Less do-as-you're told, more do-as-you-please.

RICHARD

The way *we* do.

NANCY

Yes—the way we do. (*She looks at him tenderly, a little pityingly, perhaps.*) Oh, you dear boy, you. [*For a long instant RICHARD looks into her eyes. When he finally speaks, it is with difficulty.*]

RICHARD

You've—been awfully nice to me—

NANCY

Isn't everyone?

RICHARD

But I think you're one of the few people in the world who's nice without any reason but—just being nice. No—what-do-you-call-it?—ulterior motive. Nothing but just dear, understanding niceness.

NANCY

Oh, I can be nasty, too! But you see I do like you so much— (*a pause. He is unable to reply.*) You can believe that.

RICHARD

I do believe it. And Nancy, I—well—I— (*NANCY decides to tread on safer ground:*)

NANCY

I read the new story last night before bed. Isn't "Ride a Cock-Horse" the newest one?

RICHARD

Yes. Did you like it?

NANCY

I don't know when I've had a better time. I wept buckets.

RICHARD

Do you mean it—?

NANCY

Honestly! (*She extends her hand.*) When I lie, my hand trembles. Does it?

[*RICHARD gingerly examines it. She makes a gesture to say, "Well, then."*]

RICHARD

I wonder will anyone take that story—

NANCY

What does that matter, if *you* know it's good?

RICHARD (*dubiously*)

Um.—But somebody's got to take something soon.  
[NANCY glances at him sideways, then speaks with studied unconcern.]

NANCY

Publish it yourself—for your friends.—I've been told that for forty or fifty dollars—

RICHARD

I hate that sort of thing. If the world doesn't want it in the usual way—let the world go without.

NANCY

“Ride a Cock-Horse”—I love Mother Goose, don't you? (*He nods enthusiastically*) —There was the most heavenly edition at Scribner's just before I came away.

RICHARD (*eagerly*)

What was it like?

NANCY

About so big—huge print, illustrated with real woodcuts.

RICHARD

It sounds gorgeous! Why didn't you buy it?

NANCY

It was too expensive.

RICHARD

It couldn't be! I'll get it for you!  
[NANCY *glances at him quickly*.

NANCY

Promise?

RICHARD

Yes.

NANCY

Really?

RICHARD

Yes.

NANCY

You *will*?

RICHARD

Yes.

NANCY

It's an outrageous price.

RICHARD

What's outrageous?

NANCY

Forty-two dollars. (*a brief pause*) —I *said* it was expensive.

RICHARD

I'll send for it tomorrow. My—my *income's* due then.  
[*A sigh of relief from NANCY.*

NANCY

Thanks for it—I'll love it better than anything I



have. I suppose Mark and Oliver would call that arrested development.

RICHARD

Pooh! What do they know?

NANCY

Aren't the—conflicting tastes awkward, sometimes? [*A worried, reminiscent look comes into RICHARD'S eyes.*]

RICHARD (*rising*)

Sometimes—a little.

[*NANCY watches him intently. He is counting his resources mentally.*]

NANCY

You know, *I* think a man's greatest victory is over his own family.

RICHARD (*lowly*)

Maybe it is.

NANCY

I suppose you've always simply overridden yours—— (*RICHARD laughs shortly and shrugs.*) I wouldn't be ashamed of it. I think to be great you have to be remorseless.

RICHARD (*dubiously*)

Do you really think so?

NANCY

Every great man seems to be. When he knows he's right and people oppose him, what does he do?—Just simply extinguishes them—

RICHARD

“Extinguishes 'em”. . .

NANCY

Don't you hate people without that—audacity?

RICHARD

—They're awful.

NANCY

*Ends* are the important things—if *they're* right the means never matter. I don't hold with this "Destiny which shapes our ends"—*I* say, shape Destiny!

RICHARD (*nodding gravely*)

That's right. That's my rule of life. (*a pause. He says softly*) "Extinguishes 'em"—puts 'em out. (*a door closes inside. He glances nervously toward the house.*) There's—there comes Mark— (*He puts on a stern countenance which gradually changes to one of apprehension.*) I—I don't care to see him just now—

[*He moves toward the French Window, but MARK enters.*

MARK (*genially*)

Hello, old son— had a great sleep, didn't you? (*RICHARD is struck in his tracks by this unexpected greeting. He turns.*)

RICHARD (*scowling*)

What's it to you?

MARK

It's the right idea.

RICHARD

What do *you* know about "right ideas," you poor pinhead? (*He turns and regards the dumfounded MARK sadly.*) —We've had the pin factory for

years—and I'm only just thinking of "pinhead."  
[*He goes into the house.*]

MARK (*to NANCY*)

You see the thanks you get.

NANCY

You mustn't mind if at first he's a little suspicious of kindness. Oliver is so *strict* with him.

MARK

Quite a disciplinarian, Noll.

NANCY

I suppose the next thing he'll do will be to stop his allowance.

MARK (*knowingly*)

He may, you know—may do it this very morning.

NANCY

And a good thing perhaps—everything considered. The only difficulty is that Richard'll think he's just being—malicious.

MARK

I'll tell him we're not. I'll explain that we are acting out of kindness.

NANCY

Somehow, I'm afraid that won't convince him. (*a thoughtful pause. She rises, and goes to him.*) Listen, Mark: If there's a scene, you be just as decent as you can, all through it. Then, after the big blow comes, say: "Remember Richard, a man's greatest victory is over his own selfishness."

MARK

“A man’s greatest victory is over his own selfishness”—not bad—not at all bad.

NANCY

You won’t forget? —I should hate to have you and Oliver appear in a bad light.

MARK

I’ll tell him, all right.

NANCY (*looking off Left*)

Oh—your Mother! And I haven’t lifted a finger with the decorations! You haven’t seen me.—Remember! [*She goes into the house. For a moment MARK is left alone, murmuring to himself.*]

MARK

“A man’s greatest victory is over his own selfishness.” [*MRS. WINSLOW enters from the garden and AUGUSTA from the window, carrying a tray with a pitcher of ice water and four glasses, and two silk American flags. She places the tray on the speaker’s table at Left. ALAN and OLIVER also enter from the house.*]

MRS. WINSLOW

There! We’re ready for them now.

AUGUSTA

—And nearly time, too. (*She shudders.*) —If only they wouldn’t have a *brass* band.

ALAN

Well, Noll, I hope you’ll have a pleasant word for Washington, Lincoln and God.

[*OLIVER goes to the table, looks for his speech in the*

*vase and is alarmed to find it missing. He finally discovers it upon the hammock, picks it up and returns to the table with it.*

MRS. WINSLOW

—But I don't know what we're all coming to—we, who are an example to the townspeople!—Suppose the working-man knew that my youngest son lay asleep until nearly twelve, and had his breakfast in bed, like a Prince of Darkness? It's things like that, that cause strikes.

OLIVER

When Richard finds his allowance is stopped, he may be less luxurious.

ALAN

Really—I can't advise you too strongly, not to coerce Richard any further.

MRS. WINSLOW

Steps *must* be taken.

MARK

I happen to know that all that's needed to get him to work, is just one more little push.

ALAN

I must warn against pushing.

AUGUSTA

“Warn”?

ALAN

My advice is to treat him with the same deference you'd pay a steel trap.

MARK

Woof, woof.

ALAN

There—that's all I can say.

MARK

The oracle has spoken.

OLIVER

—And rubbish, as usual.

[RICHARD, and a very cocky RICHARD, comes in from the house, and MUFF from the garden.]

RICHARD

It must be ninety in the shade. I'm for a swim.

[OLIVER looks up from his writing.]

OLIVER

The pool's closed today.

RICHARD

Closed, your grandmother.

[He continues on his way toward the garden steps.]

OLIVER

The pool is *closed*.

MRS. WINSLOW

Richard! (*He turns.*) Did you hear what Oliver said?

RICHARD

Mother, what possible harm can there be in—

MRS. WINSLOW

We won't have this old discussion again, if you please.

[RICHARD opens his mouth to protest, but closes it

*again, instead, and moves cautiously toward OLIVER.*  
*KATIE enters from the house.*

KATIE

There's a telephone call from Amity, Ma'am.

[MRS. WINSLOW rises, and goes into the house murmuring, "‘Amity’—it must be Aunt Emma." KATIE follows. MUFF sings, "Aunt Emma is coming. Hurray! hurray!" and then makes a face at the prospect.]

OLIVER (*mumbling to himself*)

Friends, we welcome you—

RICHARD

Listen, Noll— (OLIVER ignores him and continues to mumble.) Noll!

OLIVER (*looking up*)

What?

RICHARD

I'd like my full month's allowance tomorrow, instead of week by week. You know—the whole thing, all at once.

[OLIVER turns heavily about and contemplates him.]

OLIVER

You would, would you?

ALAN

That's a perfectly reasonable request.

OLIVER

Why do you want it?

RICHARD

I want it for—for—what difference does that make?

MARK (*kindly*)

He's entitled to a reason, old fellow.

RICHARD

Well—I want to buy a book, old fellow.

MUFF

Another! ? Wanton waste.

OLIVER

Why should you need so much for one book?

RICHARD (*eagerly*)

It's not a usual one. It's a special Mother Goose.

AUGUSTA

*Mother Goose!*

MARK

You won't get anywhere by joking, Richard.

ALAN

—You don't mean the *regular* Mother Goose?

RICHARD

Yes, I do.

[ALAN *sinks back*.

AUGUSTA

Wouldn't you rather have a nice little red Kiddie-Kar?



OLIVER

This is about the limit. (*to RICHARD.*) Now get this into your head: you *can't* have the whole month's allowance. In fact, you can't have any—

RICHARD

What!

OLIVER

It has automatically stopped—until you give some indication of being old enough, and sane enough, to expend it properly.

MARK

We ask very little; if you'll simply come into the factory—

RICHARD (*furious*)

Oh, you— (*He controls himself.*) Does Mother know this?

OLIVER

It's her money. I never do anything without her advice and consent.

MUFF

Ha, ha. (*MARK looks at her.*) Sorry. It slipped.

RICHARD

Are you sure it *is* Mother's money?

AUGUSTA

Cryptic, isn't he?

RICHARD

I may be more clear in a minute! In fact, in fact I—

[*He hesitates, his courage dwindling before OLIVER'S impassive countenance.*]

OLIVER

You heard Mark's offer. Take it—or leave it.

[RICHARD *bows his head.*]

RICHARD

I've got to get that book.

MARK

When you've been at the office a week, I'll be glad to lend you something till pay day.

RICHARD (*rallying*)

Oh, *will* you? Who are you—to lend *me* money? (*to OLIVER.*) Listen: I'll put up with this and do nothing, if you'll pay me my month's allowance, and promise me a room here for my own—a permanent room, big enough to turn round in.

OLIVER

I see no reason to make any promises whatsoever.

MARK

Besides, you know Aunt Emma—

[MRS. WINSLOW *re-enters from the house.*]

RICHARD

Then it's your own fault if I have to do it!

OLIVER

Do what?

ALAN (*rising*)

Noll—if you know what's good for you—

OLIVER

When I need suggestions, I'll ask for them.

MRS. WINSLOW

Did someone say "Aunt Emma"? —That was Emma, now. She's coming next Monday, after all. Richard—you'll have to give Alan the little room at the head of the stairs and go to the Spencers' for a few days.

RICHARD (*gently*)

Mother, they've stopped my allowance. Don't you think that's enough—without putting me out of the house altogether?

MRS. WINSLOW (*uncertainly*)

Why—if one of the others will go—

RICHARD

I ask one of you—please—to do it. Just once, in my place. Just once—to show me that you *could*—(to MRS. WINSLOW.) See? (*He turns hopelessly and sits on the left arm of the hammock.*) Listen, Mother—I'm about at the end of my rope. It isn't your fault, I know—but if I can't have anything of my own here—won't you give me an allowance—just a small one—so small you won't even miss it—and let me go away somewhere?

MRS. WINSLOW

But darling—I don't want you to leave us—

RICHARD

Nor do I want to—but will you do it, Mother?

MRS. WINSLOW

I don't see why you can't get along with your brothers. And I'm sure you shouldn't go off any place by yourself.

RICHARD

I wouldn't go far—and I'd come home often—I'd see you often, really I would. I just want—a room—to myself—somewhere.

ALAN

That seems little enough to ask.

OLIVER

Living alone would be the worst thing in the world for him.

RICHARD

This is between Mother and me. You keep your stupid nose out.

MRS. WINSLOW

Hush, Richard—you mustn't speak so of Oliver's nose.— If Oliver thinks—

RICHARD

It's what *you* think—it's you I'm asking. *Will you?*  
[MRS. WINSLOW glances furtively at OLIVER. He, the picture of Reliability and Good Judgment, slowly shakes his head.]

MRS. WINSLOW

Why, my dear, I think we'd better leave it to Oliver. He knows what's best for you.

[RICHARD *rises and moves toward the window*, MARK *pats his shoulder comfortingly as he passes him*.

OLIVER

I have your own best interest at heart—bear that in mind.

MUFF

What *would* our interests do without you, Oliver?

AUGUSTA

Another pretty scene. A pity Nancy missed it.

[RICHARD *stops like a shot and half turns*.

MARK (*patronizingly—gently*)

It's hard, I know, Richard—but remember—a man's greatest victory is over his own—

RICHARD (*interrupting*)

“Over his own—”!

MARK

Yep!

RICHARD (*suddenly turning upon all of them*)

Now you listen to me, my dear family, and don't you interrupt: Ever since I remember, you've taken an unholy pleasure in finding new ways to mortify me. (*From the distance, the faint strains of a brass band begin to be heard. The tune is Sousa's "Stars and Stripes Forever."* In the ensuing scene, the family,

*with the exception of MUFF and ALAN, are more interested in the approach of the band than they are in RICHARD.)* Because I was the youngest. Because I was different from the rest of you. Because you're naturally mean—and I didn't hit back. You've done every aggravating thing you could—to—to—standardize me—to make me "average"—like you are. Well, I'm above average, see? I've got a better mind—than any of you—with the possible exception of Augusta—

AUGUSTA (*ironically*)

Oh—thanks— (*to the Family.*) That's the band, all right. They're coming—

RICHARD

—And I mean to use it in my own way. I'm "the queer one"—you can't make me out, so you divert yourselves bullying me. Persecution, that's what it is! I don't know whether Mark's been the worst with his eternal petty nagging—

MARK

Richard—you've got the wrong idea entirely—  
[RICHARD *waves the remark aside.*]

RICHARD

—Or you, Oliver, with your blundering stupidity and your idea I'm a lump of mud it's your God-given duty to finger into shape. Maybe it's been Augusta, with her infernally sharp tongue. Mother's done nothing but follow your orders. Muff's been decent

as she could be, with her love for what's funny. But you've all had your methods—

[*He stops, bows his head, swallows hard and tries to control his trembling.*]

MARK

We simply want to make a success of you. Do you object to that?

RICHARD

Yes! That's just the point! Nobody's got any right to make anything of anyone! My future's *my* job. If I fail at it, all right. I'd rather fail in *my* own way than hit the sky in someone else's!

[*People among the crowd are heard greeting each other in the garden.*]

AUGUSTA

There's philosophy for you.

MRS. WINSLOW

Poor child—his nerves are all upset. (*She goes to the railing and peers into the garden.*) —They've turned into the drive. Mark—the awning—

[*MARK raises the awning and fastens it.*]

AUGUSTA

I've got some bromides upstairs.

MUFF

I'll get one—

RICHARD

No! No! —I'm not going to be stopped now. That's

the way of it—whenever I assert myself, you treat me as though I'm sick. Well—I'm through. I don't look for understanding any more—I don't expect any regard for different points of view—individual preference—*my right to do my own work in my own way*. I ask *simply* to be *let alone*. And you won't even promise me a room to myself— (*A pause.*) Will you? [MUFF and ALAN alone are listening to him.]

MARK

—What? —Listen, old man, you aren't practical. With guests in the house—

RICHARD

—Or enough money to go off somewhere on my own—money you can easily afford—as a loan, if you like. You won't let me have it— (*A pause.*) Will you?

ALAN (*softly, to OLIVER*)

Give it to him, Noll. Give it to him. (OLIVER *preserves a stony countenance, merely raising his brows a little over his speech*. ALAN *turns to MRS. WINSLOW.*) Mother Winslow! —I tell you this is *serious*.

MRS. WINSLOW

I think, Alan, we understand Richard's needs as well as you do— (*nervously.*) I do hope that tent pole is firm. Augusta—you're sure the lemonade has enough sugar? (AUGUSTA *nods*. *Murmurs are heard from the approaching crowd off stage.*) I am certain that when you and Oliver talk it over calmly—



RICHARD

I know what *that* means— Promise me one or the other now?

[*The band grows louder.*]

AUGUSTA

Heavens, what music!

[*MRS. WINSLOW and MUFF go to the railing.*]

MARK

Look at Mayor Duncan—big as life.

[*OLIVER folds up the speech, and puts it in the vase.*]

MRS. WINSLOW

He's too old to march all this distance.

MUFF

—And fat.

RICHARD

—All right, then, here goes!—I've got a little piece of news for you!

MARK (*simultaneously*)

Lord! Half the factory's out.

[*OLIVER rises and bows from the railing to somebody in the invisible crowd which has now entered the garden.*]

AUGUSTA

Oh! That infernal tune! And we wonder that Europe calls us vulgar—

MUFF (*simultaneously*)

There's Judge Ainslee! And look!—Mrs. Potts—with the banner—

MRS. WINSLOW (*simultaneously*)

Do you remember last year? The salad? Oh, I *do* hope you chose a cool spot for it!

RICHARD

*Listen* to me! Listen, will you?

OLIVER

—Don't let them see you till after my speech.

[*The Family retreat from the railing. Murmurs from the crowd.*]

RICHARD (*to OLIVER*)

Listen, you!— *Will* you listen?

OLIVER

Oh, do keep quiet for a *minute*!

RICHARD

I'm not *going* to make pins! (*NANCY comes in from the house and stands watching RICHARD.*) I'm going to write—do you understand? And you can't stop me! I can stop you, though! You think you own this house, don't you? You think you own everything. Well, as it happens—I'm the one who—

[*He stops suddenly as he sees NANCY, moves Right, and sits on the bench. MUFF hastens to NANCY and takes her arm. Murmurs from the crowd.*]

MUFF

They're nearly here! Come on—let's get a front seat!  
[*She hurries the reluctant NANCY toward the garden steps.*]

OLIVER (*amiably*)

I count on you two to start the applause!

[*He begins to adjust his tie, and smooth down his hair. The band begins a rousing tune.*]

NANCY

Oliver— isn't it time for—the last resort?

MUFF

Come on, Nancy!

NANCY

I'm coming—

[*She goes out with MUFF. OLIVER turns to RICHARD.*]

OLIVER

You'll *write*, will you? Well, it happens that I've locked up every bit of writing and every book you own! You'll get them again when you've learned to talk sense.

[*He goes to the railing and watches the crowd approach.*]

RICHARD

You dared—! (*a pause. He is all but overcome with anger. He takes several deep breaths and swallows hard, then speaks lowly.*) Oliver— (*OLIVER does not turn. He sees a friend in the crowd, and waves his hand to him. Richard speaks more loudly:*)

Oliver—! (*no answer.*) Oliver—! (*OLIVER turns impatiently.*) Will you give my things back to me? (*OLIVER turns away.*) —This instant?

OLIVER (*over his shoulder*)

No!

[RICHARD goes to the table, seizes the speech and hides it behind his back. AUGUSTA has turned to OLIVER in time to see RICHARD take the speech, but does not realize what it means.]

RICHARD

Oliver.— Oliver! (*again OLIVER turns.*) Will you give me them back?

OLIVER

—You start at the office on Monday, or I'll burn the lot of them—think *that* over.

RICHARD (*in a fury*)

You—!

[*Behind his back, he wrenches the wooden ends from the scroll and drops them upon the floor. He folds the speech together. Slowly, carefully he tears the paper straight through. He brings his hands from behind his back, and tears it in two directions.*]

AUGUSTA (*to OLIVER, shrilly*)

It's your speech!

OLIVER

What!

[*He rushes at RICHARD, who successfully evades him.*]

RICHARD (*still tearing*)

Now, will you—*now* will you?

OLIVER

I'll break your neck for you, that's what I'll do!

MRS. WINSLOW (*simultaneously*)

Oliver! Oliver! Do you want them to hear you?—  
Richard, how could you?

AUGUSTA

Quick, Mark! We can piece it together.

[RICHARD *flings the pieces into the air and* MARK, ALAN, *and* AUGUSTA *begin frantically to pick them up as they fall.*

RICHARD

*There's* your "Bigger Business"! *There's* your "Municipal Welfare"! *There's* your "Auspicious Occasion"!

AUGUSTA

He's gone mad!

ALAN

It looks like a total loss, to me.

[AUGUSTA *and* MARK *attempt to piece the speech together on the table.*

OLIVER (*advancing*)

Well, young man—!

MRS. WINSLOW

Richard! go to your room at once!

RICHARD

But, you see, I haven't *got* any room.

OLIVER

I'll fix you so that—

AUGUSTA (*to OLIVER*)

Oliver! Don't be an idiot! You've got a speech to make!

MARK (*to RICHARD*)

We'll take care of you later.

[*RICHARD merely smiles. OLIVER is staring into space, frowning.*]

AUGUSTA

You remember it, don't you?

OLIVER

No!

RICHARD

Give 'em a brief account of Cap'n John Smith's early struggles with the Indians. (*MARK scowls.*) —Or tell 'em how pins are made, and why—

MARK

*You'd better be saying your prayers.*  
[*Murmurs from the crowd.*]

OLIVER

Wait a minute! (*slowly and heavily:*) “My friends—we welcome you—this auspicious occasion may introduce to a city”—(*He tries to remember.*) “—a city—a city—” (*MARK repeats it after him, by way of encouragement.*) “—to a city ever richer—ever richer—ever richer—” (*MARK and AUGUSTA repeat*

it.) “—in—in the public spirit of its citizens—new—  
new ideas for the municipal welfare.”

RICHARD (*softly*)

Hurray!

[MRS. WINSLOW *turns imploring eyes upon him. He subsides.*

OLIVER

“And I am sure of—sure of”—

[*All wait expectantly. A pause. The band has now nearly arrived, serving only to increase OLIVER’S wretchedness.*

ALAN

—Of what, Noll?

MRS. WINSLOW

It’s splendid, so far—

AUGUSTA

You’ll remember it! Think—think!

[*A pause. OLIVER stares into space, his face contorted with thought. The family watch him fearfully. The band grows louder.*

MRS. WINSLOW

Think! Think!

OLIVER (*finally*)

It’s gone from me entirely.

RICHARD (*softly*)

Now he belongs to the Ages.

OLIVER

Oh, *you'll* pay for this—

RICHARD

What are you asking, Noll?

AUGUSTA (*to OLIVER*)

It will come back. It *must*!

RICHARD

It's a pity Aunt Emma's not here with her Ten-minute Talk on Cross-Fertilization—

AUGUSTA

Won't someone exterminate him?

ALAN (*to OLIVER*)

Turn your head to the right—that helps, sometimes—

[*OLIVER does so, but without avail. He grows more and more nervous.*]

MRS. WINSLOW

What was the gist of it?

OLIVER (*hoarsely*)

Progress—town's industrial development—more factories—more business.

AUGUSTA

Mark can give an extemporaneous one!

OLIVER (*eagerly*)

Yes! Yes, Mark—you're clever—

MARK (*very scared*)

D—don't be silly . . .



*[The band-music stops suddenly. A voice is heard off Left.]*

VOICE

Three cheers for the Winslows!

CROWD

Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!

*[The cheers are followed by a pandemonium of sounds, tin horns, wooden clappers, cow bells—shots from a repeating revolver, fire-crackers—all the customary noises. Then comes an expectant hush.]*

AUGUSTA

Oh, agony, agony!— Oliver, go and tell them something! (OLIVER does not budge. She speaks scornfully:) Head of the family—you.

*[OLIVER takes a deep breath.]*

MRS. WINSLOW

“Friends— On this auspicious occasion—” (OLIVER rises.) *Brave boy.*

*[OLIVER takes a deep breath and crosses to the railing. There is a shout followed by silence. The family wait, anxious and helpless.]*

OLIVER (*in a quavering voice:*)

“F-friends, we welcome you.” (*He clears his throat.*)

“This auspicious occasion may introduce to a city—a city—” (*His voice dwindles.*) “—even richer in—public spirit—citizens—” (*A pause; he repeats.*)

“—er—richer—er—public spirit citizens—”

*[A dreadful wait, the family suffers tortures. Some-*

*one in the crowd laughs mockingly. Another silence. Again the jeer.*

MARK (*in a whisper*)

Lord—what'll they think of us?

AUGUSTA

It's a disgrace. Next year they'll go to the Aldens.

MRS. WINSLOW

Why does he wait so long?

OLIVER (*doggedly*)

“Richer—public spirit—er—citizens—”

[*There is another awful pause. Suddenly RICHARD goes over and stands beside OLIVER.*]

RICHARD (*to the crowd*)

Hello, here I am. I am Richard—and I thank my brother for the flattering introduction as “public-spirited citizen.” (*He slaps OLIVER upon the shoulder.*) That's just the word for me—“public-spirited.” [*He swallows hard and tries to control his trembling.*]

MRS. WINSLOW (*to MARK*)

His left knee—it's shaking so.

RICHARD

—It applies to everything about me but my left knee, which at present's got private qualms. (*He takes a drink of water. The crowd laughs. RICHARD takes heart from the laughter.*) My text this morning—my text is—

[*In panic, he looks to OLIVER for assistance. OLIVER compresses his lips and turns away.*]

ALAN (*in a hoarse whisper:*)

Chamber of Commerce stuff.

MARK

More factories! Industrial progress!

RICHARD (*to the crowd*)

“Industrial progress.” (*a pause.*) —And how silly it is.

[*The crowd laughs again. RICHARD mounts the table.*]

MARK

More factories—did you hear me? More factories.

RICHARD (*on the table*)

—No more factories under *any* circumstances!—And as for that pin-factory of mine, every Saturday I’ll give the workmen a full holiday to *forget* the old pins and enjoy themselves.

[*Cheers of joy from the crowd. The band plays “He’s a Jolly Good Fellow.”*]

MARK

—Till September, you brat—only till September!

RICHARD (*to the crowd*)

—Not only till September! All the whole year round! (*More cheers.*) What the world needs is more leisure and fewer alarm-clocks—less do-as-you’re-told and more do-as-you-please. As—as the immortal patriot—poet—er—poet-patriot—Cap’n—Cap’n John Keats—said, in—in—his third epistle to the Indians, “Beauty is Truth,” and vice versa. So why fuss and fume trying to cross-fertilize a beautiful town like

this into something it was never intended to be? It's all right as it is. There's too much of this making things over, anyway. "Industrial center"—bah! All smoke and steam and scurry and scamper. Don't do it! Stay different! Let it be! (*He turns to the family and adds lowly:*) —And you let *me* be.

OLIVER

Get through with this nonsense, my friend—I've got something waiting for you.

RICHARD (*to the crowd:*)

When we get through with this nonsense, my friends, we've got something waiting for us—the satisfaction of knowing that to be different doesn't mean to be inferior. There's no such thing as inferiority, anyway—neither in individuals, nor in towns, nor in nations. This little nation realized that once in 1776—and you know what happened— (*Cheers from the crowd. RICHARD turns to the family and murmurs: "That'll get 'em," then turns again to the crowd.*) —Being different—*that's* what makes life worth *living*! America's kept *her* individuality—where'd she be if she hadn't? Let's keep ours!— And let's see this inferiority thing as the myth it is—a myth—invented by tyrants—to make *themselves* superior! (*The crowd is hushed.*) And oh, my dear, dear, fellow-citizens, if any one of *you* feels it, mind you treat it just the way those inferior little Colonies did: declare yourself—free, equal—and independent! Don't fire until you see the whites of their eyes. *But* when you do see 'em, *black em!*

[*The crowd breaks into a pandemonium of shouts—*  
“*Yea! Yea! Yea!*”

MUFF (*her shrill voice demanding from the garden:*)

What’s the matter with Richard?

[*The crowd roars a response—“He’s all right!”*

NANCY (*shouting, from the garden:*)

Three cheers for Richard Winslow!

[*The answer is deafening. RICHARD, still on the table, bows to the crowd. MARK takes a cigarette from his pocket and lights it. RICHARD descends from the table and confronts the family:*

RICHARD

Now are we equals or not?

OLIVER

You’ll see what we are soon enough!

RICHARD

Well, as I started to tell you: I *own* this house—

OLIVER

Nonsense!

RICHARD

And I *own* the factory! And everything else you’ve got, and more too!

OLIVER

Don’t talk like an idiot!

RICHARD

If you don’t believe me, ask Alan. You can go to him for all the morbid details.

[NANCY enters from the garden.]

ALAN

If anyone wants me, I may be found in my room.

[He goes out into the house.]

RICHARD

Hello, Nancy! —It's been a hot morning. (*He plucks the cigarette from MARK's hand and goes to NANCY.*)  
Swim?

NANCY

I'd love it.

RICHARD (*to the family:*)

If anyone wants me, I may be found in my swimming-pool.

[*The band strikes up "Dixie."* RICHARD touches the cigarette to the three balloons on the side of the hammock. He and NANCY move toward the garden-steps. The family stares after them, speechless.]

*Curtain*

## ACT THREE





## ACT THREE

*Scene: The Living-room.*

*Time: A few hours later, the same day.*

*At Rise: The stage is empty. Then NANCY enters from the French Window, wearing the same dress as in Act II. She is followed by RICHARD, who now wears a dark coat and gray trousers.*

RICHARD

Nancy! Wasn't it great? Good swim, eh?

NANCY

Marvelous! I'm so cool—

RICHARD (*advancing*)

Nancy— (*She looks up inquiringly. He concludes lamely:*) Hello.

NANCY

How are you?

RICHARD

I'm wonderful!

NANCY (*she looks at him, smiling tenderly, perhaps a little pityingly*)

—I know you are.

[*A pause.*]

RICHARD

Nancy—

NANCY

What?

RICHARD

Don't move.

NANCY

Why?

RICHARD

You look so beautiful.

NANCY

I wish I were.

RICHARD

I shan't ever forget you, sitting there now.

NANCY

How do you know you won't?

RICHARD (*going to her*)

I know. (*There is a long silence. They gaze at each other, spellbound. Then:*) —You know, I don't believe you just happened the way ordinary people do. You're—there's a strangeness about you—as if all the lovely things on earth were gathered and pruned and ordered—and then a picture painted from them. You're the picture come to life.— Or I might be imagining you—I feel as though you're someone I dreamt—. If I woke—

NANCY

I'm real, all right—never you fear. I'm alive.

RICHARD

Let's see . . . (*He holds out his hands to her, palms upward. She places hers upon them. He speaks in a hushed voice:*) Yes— (*She rises slowly.*) I can feel you're alive. It's like a lake looks, with rain falling on it. Oh, Nancy dear, dear Nancy, you feel it too, don't you? What is it? What is it?

[*She raises her face to his. He is bending to kiss her, when suddenly ALAN appears in the window.*]

NANCY (*recovering herself*)

What am I thinking of?

[*She turns abruptly and goes out into the hall. ALAN enters, waits a moment, then speaks:*]

ALAN

Richard, I'd be careful of Nancy if I were you.

RICHARD

Careful?

ALAN

She suffers from a complaint known as over-enthusiasm.

RICHARD

Over-enth—what do you mean—?

ALAN

You'd better skip, Richard. The family's been rowing like magpies for two hours in Noll's room. They're coming down in a minute.

RICHARD

I'd like to hear them.

ALAN

I'll call you later on. It'll be better, really.

RICHARD (*hesitates*)

Well, you're my lawyer— I'll be back though.

[*He goes out the French Window. A moment, then*

AUGUSTA, MARK, OLIVER, MUFF *enter from the hall.*

MARK (*as he comes in*)

Well, of all the rotten, low-down ways to take a mean advantage—

AUGUSTA

It's outrageous. Simply outrageous. Whoever heard of such a thing!

OLIVER

An insult to Father's memory, that's what it is!

MARK

Of course it's an insult to Father's memory—Grandfather's, too.

[*MRS. WINSLOW enters from the dining-room.*

MRS. WINSLOW

Children! Children!

OLIVER

It's amazing to me how a sane person could even contemplate such a trick.

MARK

We've got no proof that he's sane.

MUFF

Heavens, what a racket!

*[She seats herself upon the sofa.]*

OLIVER (*to* MRS. WINSLOW)

If he hadn't been brought up with so much care, you might expect it. But when—

MRS. WINSLOW

Richard has always been a little weak on right and wrong.

MARK (*to* ALAN)

Well, why don't you say something?

ALAN

I've been waiting since the crowd left for a lull in the conversation.

MARK

Oh, come down off your high horse.

OLIVER

Don't worry, Mother. We'll arrange it. (*to* ALAN.) Are you sure that Transfer of Rights is complete enough?

*[ALAN shuts his lips tightly.]*

AUGUSTA

Alan! Do you realize it's nearly dinner-time?

ALAN

The statute—the law—of New York State says that—

MARK

—Dumbest nonsense I ever heard of—

OLIVER

Mark!

MARK

—Or why didn't they find it out when the thing was probated?

OLIVER

Mark!

MRS. WINSLOW

Surely old Judge Morris was competent to—

AUGUSTA

Mother, it's common knowledge what killed *that* man—

MUFF (*glumly*)

It's drink done it!

OLIVER (*to ALAN*)

Suppose it *had* been discovered then? (*ALAN does not answer. OLIVER roars.*) I'm speaking to you!

ALAN

Dear, dear.

AUGUSTA (*pleading*)

Alan—!

MRS. WINSLOW

Do you realize that Oliver is speaking to you?

ALAN

—It would have been Mrs. Winslow's duty as executrix to see that a guardian was appointed, and his share at once placed in safe keeping.

MARK

But confound it! Some of it was tied up in the business!

ALAN

Such risks are not countenanced—she'd have been compelled to take it out within a year—close down the factory and liquidate.

AUGUSTA (*rising*)

Preposterous.

ALAN

My dear, I am quoting law, not poetry. What did Judge Ainslee tell you when you telephoned?

OLIVER

I merely asked his opinion on—on—a hypothetical case.

ALAN

And he said your hypothetical family wouldn't have a hypothetical leg to stand on, didn't he? And that their one chance was to conciliate the brat—  
[*A pause.*]

MARK (*watching* ALAN)

I don't believe Richard would have done it without someone's pretty strong encouragement.

ALAN (*rising*)

Oh, believe what you like. (*to OLIVER.*) The only question now is, how much you'll still owe him over and above what you've now got.

OLIVER (*grunts*)

Eh?

ALAN (*to MRS. WINSLOW*)

However you figure it, he's entitled to a sum which comes—as I've repeatedly told you—to more, considerably more, than the whole estate is now worth.

MRS. WINSLOW

There must be some way—

ALAN

There's just one— (*all look hopeful.*) You could disprove his legitimacy.

[MUFF *whoops with delight.*

MRS. WINSLOW

It's awful—the whole thing is simply awful.

AUGUSTA

Don't notice him, Mother.

MRS. WINSLOW

—How sharper than a serpent's tooth.

ALAN

Not at all. And I've no doubt that eventually he'll come around—compromise, at any rate. That is, if you behave—



MARK

If we what?

ALAN

Behave, I said. Believe me, it's in your own best interests to make any concessions necessary. If you don't—well, he's worked out some plan or other—I've an idea you wouldn't like the taste of it. I'll get him.

*[He goes out the French Window. For a moment the Family sits motionless. Then:]*

MARK

There may be something in what he says, Noll.

OLIVER

Yes, I believe Richard will ultimately do what is right.

MARK

He's never been one to take a petty advantage.

MRS. WINSLOW

It is quite unlike his sweet, retiring nature.

MUFF

Well, upon my soul—

AUGUSTA

Isn't it lovely?

MUFF *(in a hollow voice)*

How the old home has changed.

AUGUSTA

Everything we own stolen right from under our

noses—and you sit there—holding your chins—sentimentalizing over Richard's noble qualities—Richard's! —The little tin god—kow-tow to him—do!

MARK

If you'd quit stewing like a tin kettle and use your tin head, you'd understand that if Richard chooses to be nasty—

AUGUSTA

If he chooses to be nasty! Dear, dear! Don't you realize that giving in to him only makes him all the cockier?

[*A pause. Then:*

MARK (*to OLIVER*)

There may be something in what she says.

MUFF

*You learned, didn't you, Mark?*

AUGUSTA

He simply battens on kindness! Can't you see that what he wants is the soundest drubbing he's ever got? Then, if that doesn't work, there'll be time enough for concessions.

[MARK *looks at* OLIVER. OLIVER *looks at* MARK.]

MARK (*to OLIVER*)

You know, I think she's right. (*He pats AUGUSTA's arm.*) You're right.

OLIVER

Yes—it's discipline he needs— (*to AUGUSTA.*) You're right—just as Nancy said—

MARK (*puzzled*)

“Just as Nancy—” (*quickly.*) What did Nancy say?

OLIVER

Oh—

[*RICHARD is heard from the porch, calling and whistling to his dog.*]

MUFF

Shh—shhh!

AUGUSTA

Now land on him—hear me? Hard! (*RICHARD enters Back Right with the puppy in his arms and a flower is his buttonhole.*) My! Aren’t we dressed up, though?

RICHARD

It’s a failing of the *nouveau riche*.

MUFF

Richard, what *I* want to know is—are you legitimate?

[*RICHARD laughs, then looks around him at the family.*]

RICHARD

Are you all comfortable? Quite comfortable?

MARK

What’s that to you?

RICHARD

I always like my guests to be comfortable.

MRS. WINSLOW (*indicating the puppy*)

Put him outside, Richard.

RICHARD

I—he's not hurting anything.

MRS. WINSLOW

This instant!

MARK (*rising*)

Do as you're told—!

[RICHARD *hesitates a little, weakening*. ALAN *comes in, from the porch*.

AUGUSTA

He'll be wanting him in the dining-room next.

MRS. WINSLOW

The dining-room, indeed! Richard!

[RICHARD *slowly moves to the window and sets the puppy down outside*. AUGUSTA *smiles at the family and says, "See?" inaudibly*. RICHARD *returns and seats himself in OLIVER'S chair*. OLIVER *rises—and stands towering over him*.

OLIVER

Get out of that chair!

[RICHARD *does not move*.

MRS. WINSLOW

Do as Oliver says!

MARK

Go on—move!

MUFF

Don't make yourself impossible, Richard.

[RICHARD *hesitates and looks to* ALAN.]

ALAN

Why battle over a chair?

OLIVER

Will you get out?

[RICHARD *rises reluctantly.*]

RICHARD

Well, I guess one's as good as another.

[OLIVER *seats himself at the desk.* RICHARD *seats himself on the sofa.*]

OLIVER

Stand up! (RICHARD *reluctantly obeys.* OLIVER *takes a long paper from his pocket.*) Now this nonsense of yours is going to stop where it is.

MUFF

It's funny, all right—but a joke's a joke, Richard.

MRS. WINSLOW

Funny? It's an insult to his father's memory.

MARK

Ungrateful little brat—

RICHARD

Mother, I—you won't suffer a bit from it. I—

MARK

Be quiet and listen!

OLIVER

We're going to put a stop to this, once and for all. Here— (*He hands him the paper.*) That's what's called a "Transfer of Rights"— (*RICHARD opens the paper.*) You haven't a right in the world, understand—but to avoid any further trouble for yourself—you sign there at the bottom—where I've put the cross—

[*MARK hands him his fountain-pen.*]

MARK

Here— (*RICHARD takes it. He frowns over the paper.*) Go ahead, now,—we haven't all day—

RICHARD

Wait'll I read it will you?

MARK

You can read it afterward—

RICHARD (*feebly*)

I'm—I'm not going to sign anything I haven't read—

[*He glances warily at ALAN who shakes his head.*]

AUGUSTA

Alan, you keep out—

[*RICHARD stares fixedly at the paper. OLIVER rises.*]

OLIVER (*thundering*)

Will you put your name there or won't you?

MARK

Say, must I—?

OLIVER

Sign it!

MARK

Go on. Write!

[RICHARD places the paper on the sofa, and with trembling fingers poises the pen to write. AUGUSTA smiles triumphantly.]

MRS. WINSLOW

Well—that's better—

MARK

Thought you'd gouge your own mother, did you?  
How'd you like your friend Nancy to know that?

[At NANCY'S name, RICHARD stiffens, then looks at MARK defiantly.]

RICHARD

How'd you like to tell her?

OLIVER

Sign that!

[RICHARD turns on him.]

RICHARD

Who says to sign it?

OLIVER

I do—

MARK

We all do!

RICHARD

You can all go jump in the lake! (MRS. WINSLOW gasps.) All but you, Mother—you needn't.

MUFF

That's the time your foot slipped, Mark.

[MARK's *eyes narrow*.

MARK

I'm getting a line on this now.

[OLIVER *comes charging around the sofa*.

OLIVER

Will you sign that paper or won't you?

RICHARD

*No! (He tears the paper in half.)* And if you mention it again, I'll make you eat it. *(He sticks half the paper in MARK's breast-pocket, and the other half in OLIVER's.)* There's your share, and yours! *(He seats himself once more in OLIVER's chair.)* Now, when you're ready to listen, I've got a few interesting remarks to make—

[*There is a fuming silence. RICHARD straightens out the top of the desk to give himself elbow-room. OLIVER whispers something to MARK, who nods. OLIVER clears his throat.*

OLIVER

If we've been—

MARK (*simultaneously*)

Perhaps we've been—

[OLIVER *frowns at MARK. MARK subsides.*

OLIVER

—If we haven't shown the proper consideration for



your ideas of a career—of course we're willing to make a few concessions—

AUGUSTA

Oliver, you're—

*[He ignores her.]*

OLIVER

—You can have your allowance and a regular room to yourself—

MARK

Provided, of course, that you'll be reasonable about this—

MUFF

It's what you've been begging for all along, isn't it?

MARK

What more do you want?

ALAN

I'm sure the family would live up to their side of it, Richard.

OLIVER

Yes, yes—

RICHARD

They'll live up to my side of it! Whose lawyer are you, anyway?

ALAN

Why—er—yours, I suppose.

RICHARD

Well, you're fired. *(He opens the large cheque-book*

*on the table.*) —As to the family finances, henceforth I shall sign all cheques myself. (*He begins to make out one.*) I'll expect a thousand cash-advance in the bank by tomorrow.

MARK

It's a hold-up!

OLIVER

If you think we're going to stand for this!

RICHARD

Listen! If I have to bring public suit for these rights of mine—

MRS. WINSLOW (*rising*)

Richard! Oh—what would people think? No one must know—not one soul, children! Not one soul! [*She sinks into the chair again.*]

RICHARD (*tearing off a cheque*)

That's up to all of you. There—cheque number one—Scribner's—forty-two dollars— (*He holds it up to view, smiling with satisfaction upon it. Again MARK's eyes narrow. RICHARD places the cheque in an envelope which already contains a letter and seals it. Then he makes out more cheques.*) —Provided a disagreeable lawsuit's not necessary, I'm willing, as head of the family, to make a few concessions. First of all, there'll be a generous life-income for Mother. Then maybe later on I'll settle a couple of dollars on each of you—I don't know— You can count on a dowry, Muff—

MUFF

Let that get noised around a bit, will you?

RICHARD

For the duration of good behavior, I'll even continue your allowances. And by "good behavior" I mean the fulfillment of certain conditions I'm about to make.

MARK

Isn't it rich?

RICHARD (*to MARK*)

From you, Mark and Oliver, I shall expect weekly, until further notice, the contribution of an original short story, poem or essay which you can write in the evenings.

OLIVER

Hah!

MARK

*I'll* write him a poem—

RICHARD

Good! I'll be glad to criticize it personally.

OLIVER

We're to follow your orders to the letter, are we?

RICHARD

You certainly are. And one of 'em's that you're not to talk business at meals.

OLIVER

I'm not, eh?

RICHARD

No. It bores me. Just bear in mind that you're not major-general here now—you're buck-private. Also, please remember that my rooms are *my rooms*. I'll choose a few tomorrow.

AUGUSTA

Such a large choice, isn't there?

RICHARD (*rising and gathering up the cheques*)

It'll be larger—because you see on Monday you and Alan move to the house at Grand View.

OLIVER (*rising*)

That's been sold.

RICHARD

I don't recall selling it.

AUGUSTA

Catch me living in that shanty!

ALAN

I'm afraid you'll have to, my dear.

RICHARD (*to ALAN*)

I'm afraid she will, too. Now you're paid off— (*He goes to MRS. WINSLOW.*) Here's your cheque, Mother. [*She accepts it uncertainly.*]

MRS. WINSLOW

Th—thank you, dear boy.

[*RICHARD returns to the table. MARK holds out his hand as he comes to him.*]

RICHARD (*as he passes MARK*)

Kindly wait your turn. Muff—

[MUFF *takes the cheque and reads it.*

MUFF

Whee! Now I can go straight! (*then, suddenly worried.*) Is it good?

OLIVER

No!

RICHARD

Yes! Now, Mark—and Augusta—

[*He gives them cheques, which they accept with very bad grace. The last cheque he offers to OLIVER, who abruptly tears it in two.*

OLIVER (*to RICHARD*)

Get clear on one thing: When this is finally settled—as it will be—you'll work off every cent of your debt in the factory.

[RICHARD *regards him speculatively.*

RICHARD

Oliver, there's something so dreadfully thick about you. (*to MUFF.*) Haven't you often felt it?

MUFF

Often.

RICHARD

—Old Rock of Ages. No mind, no wit, just the ten commandments, and a deep, chesty voice.

MUFF

Boom! Boom!

MRS. WINSLOW

Hush, Martha. Richard is speaking!

[MUFF *smothers her laugh and turns away.*]

RICHARD

—You weren't born to rule people. Your eye's too straight for it. A born ruler's got to be just a trifle cock-eyed, so's to see both sides of things. You'll never be able to see my side, but I'll do my own work in my own way, Noll—

OLIVER

Oh, will you?

RICHARD

Yes. And even if I fail at it, I'll still be ahead of you—because I move, Noll, and you— (*to MUFF.*) —Well, look at him—old Sitting Bull. (*He goes to the desk whistling "Home Sweet Home."* MRS. WINSLOW *risés, draws a deep breath and goes out into the dining-room.*) Now, then, where's a stamp? Where's a stamp? (*He searches the drawer of the desk, finally finds one and affixes it to the Scribner's letter. MARK is pacing up and down. RICHARD smiles at him.*) What's the matter, Mark? You don't look very happy. (*MARK reaches over and gives RICHARD'S nose a good sound pull. RICHARD sniffs it back into shape and announces:*) Disrespect to the royal nose! Mark's allowance cut in half!

[OLIVER *goes out by way of the French Window to the porch. AUGUSTA rises.*]

AUGUSTA

Alan, will you come, please?

[ALAN *rises*. RICHARD *holds out the letter to him*.

RICHARD

Alan!—Post this, will you? (ALAN *hesitates*.) Better step, son, better step. (AUGUSTA *goes out*. ALAN *smiles, takes the letter, and follows AUGUSTA*. RICHARD *leans back in his chair and looks about him*.) Where's Nancy? I want to see Nancy.

MARK (*rising*)

I'd like to see her for a moment myself.

MUFF

Popular girl, Nancy. (*She returns her cheque to RICHARD*.) When you find her, give her this, will you? Say it's from me, on account.

MARK

She wins, eh?

MUFF

She certainly does.

MARK (*to RICHARD*)

I just want to inform you that I'm able to put two and two together.

RICHARD

That's fine, Mark. (*To MUFF*.) He can count.

MUFF

But he doesn't seem to, does he? At least, not with Nancy.

[*She goes out into the hall*. MARK and RICHARD are

*left alone. MARK studies him for a moment, then laughs shortly.*

MARK

Quite irresistible, aren't you?

RICHARD

I'm a gilded youth, Mark. Just a gilded youth.

MARK

Besides your highwayman 'talents, quite a young ladykiller, too.

RICHARD

Better run along now, Mark. I'm busy—

MARK

I suppose you think she's the prize little accomplice, eh? Well, let me tell you it's you who's the accomplice.

RICHARD

What the devil are you talking about?

MARK

Only the truth. (*in mock compassion.*) Aw—and did he think he was such a fascinating fellow? And did he think she fell head over heels at first sight? Pity to disillusion the little man.

RICHARD

What are you talking about now?

MARK

Why, she had a regular formula— (*He laughs mock-*



ingly.) "His trouble is mental—be kind to him, Mark—it may make a man of him." Then to Noll: "Lock up his silly books and manuscripts—that'll make him a business-man!"

RICHARD

Oh shut up—

MARK

Lord knows what she wanted—but she's sharpened her wits on the lot of us, all right. Interested in you? Bah! She's interested in herself. She glories in the way she can manage people. It's her main amusement. (*ALAN comes in again.*) When you've seen as much of the world as I have, my son, you'll learn to recognize that type of woman by the look in her eye.

RICHARD (*rising*)

You damned liar you—get out—

MARK

Ask Muff, then. Didn't you hear what Muff said about that cheque? "Tell her it's from me on account"?

ALAN

Mark—

MARK

Shut up! (*To RICHARD.*) —And do you know what for? A bet, that's what! Fifty dollars she could get some spunk into you in a week—flatter it in. Honestly, with people like you to experiment on, life looks a lot brighter for the guinea-pig. (*He moves*

*toward the window.*) —But I'll tell *her* a few things about teaching babies to steal.

ALAN

She never dreamed he'd actually do this.

MARK

No? Let's see what she says.

[*He goes out the window.* RICHARD looks at ALAN, almost too overcome to speak. Then:

RICHARD

Oh, I knew the bottom would fall out of it somehow. I knew.

ALAN

Most of that was nothing but Mark's talk.

RICHARD

I heard what Muff said. She did bet that with Muff, didn't she?

ALAN

Why—er—

RICHARD

Oh, that's a rotten trick. That's one hell of a trick, that is.

ALAN

She wanted to help you.

RICHARD

Whatever she wanted, she was with the rest of them. Using me, meddling, making me over—always making me over.

ALAN

You're taking this too seriously, you really are.

RICHARD

—Anyone but her, Alan—anyone. It's humiliating enough when your own family treats you the way I've been treated, but when someone—someone you thought—liked you, thinks you're so low and pitiful that you've got to be bucked-up with kindness—oh, that's—that's awful. She couldn't ever do anything but pity me.

ALAN

Richard, I think she's honestly fond of you.

RICHARD

So am I fond of Portly: I nursed him through dis-temper.

ALAN

You must have been a little more than a sick dog to her, or—

RICHARD

Oh, but Alan—it's such a long way from someone who's always been adored to—someone who's always been despised—

ALAN

But you haven't—

RICHARD (*quickly*)

Yes, I have! But I'm myself, just the same—and she's herself! It's other people who've put one here and

one— (*He gestures helplessly into the air*) — there.— (*a pause.*) Still, there must be some place to meet in between, as ourselves, Alan. There's got to be some place, hasn't there, Alan? (*ALAN does not answer.*) One can go up, and the other can come down.— (*a pause. His voice rises, suddenly:*) The other can be brought down! She's got to be, Alan. She's got to realize that we're equals. Or else, else . . .

ALAN

What?

RICHARD

Or else she's lost to me.

[*He rises, and moves to the fireplace. KATIE crosses from the dining-room to the hall.*]

KATIE

Dinner is served, Mr. Richard.

[*She goes out as NANCY comes in from the hall. RICHARD sees her and at once occupies himself with setting the clock.*]

NANCY

Alan, Mark says that—

ALAN

Exactly.—And even you couldn't ask for a tighter tight corner. Good luck to you.

[*ALAN goes out the French Window. RICHARD sets the clock. It strikes five-thirty. He moves the hand to six.*]

NANCY (*suddenly*)

Richard, I—

[*The clock strikes six. She stops. RICHARD moves it to six-thirty.*

RICHARD

What?—

[*It strikes six-thirty. He moves it to seven.*

NANCY

I was going to say that— (*It strikes seven.*)  
Oh-h-h-h-h-!

[*She turns away, biting her lip. RICHARD moves the hand to twenty-seven minutes past seven, starts the clock, closes its door, and turns to NANCY.*

RICHARD

Now: you were saying?

[*She watches the clock, expecting another strike.*

AUGUSTA and OLIVER enter and cross to the dining-room.

AUGUSTA

Dinner is ready.

[*They go out.*

NANCY

Richard—surely you wouldn't misconstrue what—  
what nearly happened—

RICHARD

Of course not.

NANCY (*bristling suddenly*)

—And why not?

RICHARD

You *are* amusing—

[*He turns away. There is a brief pause. Then:*

NANCY

Richard, I've heard what you've done to your family.

RICHARD

Have you, Nancy?

NANCY

Yes—and I presume in a way I'm responsible for it.

RICHARD (*so innocently*)

Why, how could you be?

NANCY

Of—of course you don't seriously intend to keep what you've taken—

RICHARD

Why not? It's mine. There's even a law about it.

NANCY

Law or no law, you're taking advantage of a—of a petty technicality. (*pleading.*) Give it back—there's a lamb.

RICHARD

Sorry. I can't be a lamb any more. I've been one too long.

NANCY

Well, in my opinion, it's simply rep—repre—

RICHARD

“Reprehensible”— (*The clock strikes seven-thirty.*)  
—But “I hate people without audacity,” don’t you?

NANCY

Your own family—

RICHARD

“A man’s greatest victory—”

NANCY

You must have a heart of stone.

RICHARD (*lighting a match*)

“I think to be great, you have to be remorseless. Every great man seems to be. When people oppose him, what does he do?—Just simply extinguishes them.”

[*He blows out the match.*]

NANCY

It’s like you, to keep turning my own thoughtless words against me.—And I thought I was helping you— (*She laughs, shortly.*) Well—

[*MUFF enters from the hall and moves toward the dining-room.*]

MUFF

Dinner’s ready.

[*She goes out into the dining-room. NANCY seats herself upon the sofa.*]

RICHARD (*going to her*)

You did help me. And I’m grateful for that. I *am* grateful, Nancy.

NANCY

Then show it, by—

RICHARD

—But I didn't have any illusions about your motives.

NANCY

What's the matter with my motives?

RICHARD

They get mixed. (*He gives her the cheque.*) Here—it's from Muff—on account. Nancy, you made a sporting bet with Muff on an experiment that promised to amuse you. (*She averts her head.*) —Don't you think that that was the main thing—and that helping me was just incidental?

NANCY

Incidental?

RICHARD

Yes. Honestly—wasn't most of it for the fun you got—managing people—and the satisfaction you felt in being able to make someone over? Think, Nancy.

NANCY

You're telling me odd things about myself.

RICHARD

I'm telling you true things.

NANCY

Even so—the least I could do now would be to



straighten out the mess I'd made of it, wouldn't it?

RICHARD

And from what motive this time, do you know?

NANCY

I'd have to—in conscience—for the sake of your family.

RICHARD

No—for your sake. Your sake first. Your sake always. If someone else gains, it's the merest chance. That's too bad, but it's so.

NANCY

I—don't see it.

RICHARD

You want me to go back to what I was.

NANCY (*rising*)

No! No!

RICHARD

Yes, you do. Because all of a sudden you find that people and—and things have got out of your hands. That hurts your sense of superiority, doesn't it? Oh, I know what a terribly precious thing it is to you! So long as you've got it, nothing can touch you, can it?

NANCY

In other words, you think I'm a vain, empty little fool.

RICHARD

Oh, no, I'm not saying what I think of you. I'm just asking what it is you want of me.

NANCY

I don't know what I want.

[MARK comes in from the porch, stops for an instant at the sight of them, then goes out into dining-room.

ALAN follows him. RICHARD goes to NANCY.

RICHARD

Don't worry about their old money. Tomorrow I'll give it back to them. (*She glances at him quickly. He smiles.*) I don't need a big stick to help keep my end up. I can keep it up alone. (*He smiles again.*) —Thanks to you.

NANCY

Thank them. Thank them for every moment of devil-ing they've given you. You ought to, you know. You really ought. You'll see that some day when—when you realize how—how nice it is to be like you and how awful it is to be—like me.

[RICHARD takes her hand.

RICHARD

Oh, Nancy, Nancy! Must you be superior? Isn't being equal enough? (*Again she averts her head.*) —Or are you afraid something might happen to spoil all your beautiful contentment—something even as humiliating as—falling in love—

NANCY

You are—thorough.

[MRS. WINSLOW *opens the dining-room door.*

MRS. WINSLOW

Richard, come to dinner. And kindly bring Martha's guest.

RICHARD

I want you please to tell the family something. Tomorrow you can have the whole thing back.

MRS. WINSLOW

But—but—oh dear, and I thought I was through with my worries. With—with Oliver helping me I live in constant fear that when I pass on you won't all be provided for, as your Father wished.

RICHARD

I'll tell you what, Mother—divvy it up.

MRS. WINSLOW

—Divvy it up?

RICHARD

Yes.

MRS. WINSLOW (*eagerly*)

Can one?

RICHARD

It's simple. Make it a trust fund with Alan and me trustees.

MRS. WINSLOW

Oh—what a relief it would be! (*going out into*

*the dining-room.*) Children!—Richard has found a very happy solution to our difficulties. We are to divide things up—a trust fund—a—

*[Her voice is lost in the family's:]*

MARK *and* AUGUSTA. Good idea—

MUFF

That's the first sensible thing I've heard about money in this house for a month—

OLIVER

No, no! I won't stand by and see Mother forced into something—

VOICES (*from all*)

Sit down—sit down, Oliver!

*[RICHARD closes the door and the voices cease to be heard.]*

RICHARD (*to NANCY*)

Was that what you wanted?

NANCY (*extending her hand on him*)

Good-bye—and thanks a lot. You've been awfully illuminating. Now, whenever I think I'm being particularly noble, I'll know I'm just pinning roses on Nancy.

RICHARD

I can't imagine anyone wearing her roses so well.

NANCY

Thanks—you needn't bother. (*She covers her face.*)  
Oh—I'm in bits.

[*She sinks down upon the sofa and RICHARD seats himself beside her on the sofa's arm.*

RICHARD

Nancy—dear, dear Nancy—listen to me—can you listen to me now? (*She looks up. He smiles.*) —Because I knew that the gorgeous person who sailed in here like a ship never could, till her sails came down a little.

NANCY

I can't live this way. You've got to get them up again!

RICHARD

That wouldn't be hard. —Oh, Nancy, you *are* so lovely.

[*She rises.*

NANCY (*cynically*)

I told you you needn't bother.

RICHARD

It's no bother.

NANCY

Anyway, it doesn't work.

RICHARD (*also rising*)

It would, if I could be with you right along and keep telling you what I really think of you.

NANCY (*going to him*)

I—I don't suppose you'd be willing to marry me?

RICHARD

Yes, I would.

NANCY

Would you?

RICHARD

I really would.

NANCY

You're sweet, you're so sweet. (*They kiss.*) There, *that* works! —And Richard—

RICHARD

What?

NANCY

You *are* my equal.

RICHARD

I'll tell you something better than that.

NANCY

What?

RICHARD

You're mine!

*Curtain*



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